DÆDALUS

Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

Representations and Realities

	v	*Preface*
STEPHEN GREENBLATT	1	*Filthy Rites*
JUDITH N. SHKLAR	17	*Putting Cruelty First*
CARL E. SCHORSKE	29	*Mahler and Klimt: Social Experience and Artistic Evolution*
JOHN CLIVE	51	*The Versatile Signor di Bassetto: An Essay in Crime Prevention*
ROBERT DARNTON	65	*What Is the History of Books?*
JAROSLAV PELIKAN	85	*The Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of Rome as Historical Paradigm*
WENDY DONIGER O'FLAHERTY	93	*The Dream Narrative and the Indian Doctrine of Illusion*
DAVID SCOTT KASTAN	115	*Shakespeare and "The Way of Womenkind"*
JOHN HOLLANDER	131	*The West Wind and the Mingled Measure*
JOHN R. BOLY	149	*Auden and the Romantic Tradition in* The Age of Anxiety

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Representations and Realities

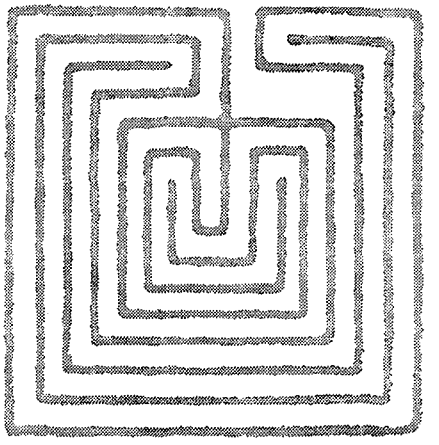
LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

SUMMER 1982: REPRESENTATIONS AND REALITIES

Issued as Vol. 111, No. 3 of the Proceedings of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences

WHITEFRIARS HALL LIBRARY
1600 Webster St., N. E.
Washington, D. C. 20017

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED



LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Preface to the Issue, "Representations and Realities"

A JOURNAL, LIKE ANY OTHER INSTITUTION, has its traditions. "Breaking the cake of custom," to use Walter Bagehot's felicitous phrase, is not a thing to be done lightly or casually. Still, there may be compelling reasons for overturning recent convention, for striking out in wholly new directions, or even for returning to earlier practices.

For those who have known *Daedalus* only in recent years, the Journal has appeared to be wholly committed to choosing a particular theme for each issue—commissioning all the essays on that single subject—and treating it in quite considerable depth. An older editorial policy that allowed for the publication also of occasional issues with contributions—solicited and unsolicited—on quite disparate subjects has been only rarely pursued in recent years. It is this older practice that we now propose to revive, though defining it in quite new ways, and using it for quite new purposes.

While most issues of the Journal will continue to explore specific themes, we expect also to publish, from time to time, collections such as this. "Representations and Realities" is clearly distinguished by having no single subject, no single theme. Still, in a very broad sense, these are all essays in the humanities, using a great variety of historical, anthropological, literary, philosophical, artistic, and musical materials, and doing so in ways that are intellectually or critically innovative. The essays find their specific unity, however, in the way so many of them move effortlessly across traditional disciplinary boundaries, their authors seemingly unaware of the conventional academic constraints of the past. They show immense freedom in the ways that they use the artifacts of our culture, refusing to be constrained by old-fashioned notions of dignity, "worthiness," or appropriateness. While there is no preaching in this issue on the virtues of "interdisciplinary" research, a number of the essays may be read as testimonials to the potentials of such study. And if there is an implicit invitation in these essays, it is for the scholar to "wander," to refuse to be penned in by the academic boundaries and critical methods of an earlier generation. While no one in this issue prates about the "uses" of the humanities, or considers it necessary to prove the proposition that a study of the past is an incomparable boon to the illumination of the present—indeed, helps to explain it—no one reading this issue will fail to see that it is to a very significant extent an analysis of ourselves, our times, our intellectual predilections, but also of certain other unarticulated prejudices. There is boldness too in many of the essays, in the willingness of authors to venture onto terrain that has not been greatly explored. Indeed, the essays are themselves "experiments" in self-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scrutiny, inquiring into contemporary ways of thinking and perceiving; hence, the title of the issue.

For those who bemoan what they perceive as a current "falling-off" in scholarly venturesomeness, this collection argues the contrary. We believe that comparable collections ought to be published in *Daedalus* in the coming years, both in the natural and the social sciences. At a time when the academic profession is experiencing substantial difficulties, when careers for young scholars in so many disciplines are particularly difficult to fashion, it is imperative that a journal like ours should seek, in whatever ways it can, to encourage new scholarship and more trenchant criticism. Both, we believe, can be stimulated by our continued commitment to publish principally on a great variety of specific subjects, while welcoming, also, bold and unconventional manuscripts that come to us over the transom.

S.R.G.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

STEPHEN GREENBLATT

Filthy Rites

On the evening of November 17, 1881, during my stay in the village of Zuñi, New Mexico, the Nehue-Cue, one of the secret orders of the Zuñis, sent word to Mr. Frank H. Cushing, whose guest I was, that they would do us the unusual honor of coming to our house to give us one of their characteristic dances, which, Cushing said, was unprecedented.[1]

So writes Captain John G. Bourke, Third Cavalry, U.S. Army, Indian fighter and amateur ethnographer, author of *An Apache Campaign* and *Snake Dance of the Moquis of Arizona*, *Mackenzie's Last Fight with the Cheyennes* and *Notes on the Theogony and Cosmogony of the Mojaves*. The ceremonies began auspiciously enough with a ritual cleansing of the long living room, but when, at nightfall, the dance began, the honored guest found himself strangely unsettled. Some of the dancers were arrayed, with appropriate picturesqueness, in breech-cloths and wild turkey feathers, but others were dressed in cast-off American army uniforms, and one, clad in a long india-rubber gossamer robe, and with a pair of goggles, painted white, over his eyes, appeared to be got up in imitation of a Catholic priest.

Captain Bourke had seated himself at one side of the dark room, behind a table on which was a small coal-oil lamp. The feeble light of the lamp cast a faint glow behind his head, and it is to this halo that he attributes the performance that followed: "The dancers suddenly wheeled into line, threw themselves on their knees before my table, and with extravagant beatings of the breast began an outlandish but faithful mockery of a Mexican Catholic congregation at vespers." With the ethnographer thus enlisted as votive figure, the parody continued, "to the uncontrolled merriment of the red-skinned listeners," with the mock priest delivering a passionate sermon and, after a brief interlude, a most surprising communion: "A squaw entered, carrying an 'olla' of urine, of which the filthy brutes drank heartily." Two or three gallons were thus consumed, we are told, and one of the participants expressed regret that the dance had not been held out of doors, in one of the plazas, for there they always made it a point of honor to eat the excrement of men and dogs. "For my part," writes Captain Bourke, "I felt satisfied with the omission, particularly as the room stuffed with one hundred Zuñis had become so foul and filthy as to be almost unbearable" (p. 6). As soon as the dance was over, he ran, he tells us, into the refreshing night air.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

One should remark at once that Captain Bourke was not hallucinating; the dance is described elsewhere, and the fraternity in question (the Ne'wekwe, or Galaxy) noted for its particular fondness for mimicking priests and army officers. Moreover, the remark about the plaza was not simply designed to heighten the visitor's no doubt amusing disgust; as another early ethnographer relates, the consumption of excrement is an essential part of the fraternity's vaunted medical powers as well as a kind of contest: "The one who swallows the largest amount of filth with the greatest gusto is most commended by the fraternity and onlookers."[2] And in a sense, Captain Bourke paid the dancers an appropriate compliment: he may indignantly deny the implicit suggestion that communion is the eating of excrement in both kinds, and may write, with evident relief and snobbery, that "Hebrews and Christians will discover a common ground of congratulation in the fact that believers in their systems are now absolutely free from any suggestion of this filth taint," but he does so in the preface to a work directly inspired by his disquieting experience, a 500-page study—the result of ten years' obsessive research—the *Scatologic Rites of All Nations.*

Like all resonant stories, Captain Bourke's is the focal point for several distinct lines of cultural and psychic force. In it we encounter a minor, but intense, version of an interesting, even haunting phenomenon: the role of loathing and disgust in the development of the human sciences. Ethnography is, in effect, the study of those who do not live by one's own rules; to study one's immediate surroundings is to change the very essence of the project, whose enabling condition is the otherness of the object of study. (There are, to be sure, attempts at ethnographic studies of one's own culture, but these must begin with a certain deliberate self-estrangement, so that familiar rules seem alien and in need of explication and representation.) Now in the West, since the onset of the early modern period, the archetypal rules, the earliest and most systematic to which the child is exposed and in which he is trained, are those governing the definition and control of wastes. The behavior manuals of the fifteenth through eighteenth centuries return again and again to codes elaborated for the management of the body's products: urine, feces, mucus, saliva, and wind.[3] Proper control of each of these products, along with the acquisition of the prevailing table manners and modes of speech, mark the entrance into civility, an entrance that distinguishes not only the child from the adult, but the members of a privileged group from the vulgar, the upper classes from the lower, the courtly from the rustic, the civilized from the savage.

Force plays a role in the imposition of these codes, but a far greater role is played by the arousal of disgust, embarrassment, "delicacy of feeling," contempt, distaste, modesty—in short, the complex shaping of a sense of social decency and social horror. When the behavioral codes are successfully implanted, the individual will experience physical and psychic discomfort in the presence of violations: blushing, an acute sense of shame, nausea. To hold back wind is dangerous, writes Erasmus in the 1530s, but one should hide the sound with a cough, for "the sound of farting, especially of those who stand on elevated ground, is horrible." "It does not befit a modest, honorable man to prepare to relieve nature in the presence of other people," counsels della Casa's *Galateo* (1558); "similarly, he will not wash his hands on returning to decent

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

society from private places, as the reason for his washing will arouse disagreeable thoughts in people"; at table, a seventeenth-century manual declares, "to blow your nose openly into your handkerchief, without concealing yourself with your serviette, and to wipe away your sweat with it . . . are filthy habits fit to make everyone's gorge rise."[4]

As these few examples should make clear, such regulations have little or nothing to do with hygiene, though health is occasionally invoked as a rationale. Their concern, rather, is the fashioning of social and personal identity, identity dependent not only on shared norms, but on differences as well. Since one of the principal agents in this process of fashioning is disgust—or more accurately, a wide range of negative sensations, from "disagreeable thoughts" and queasiness to amused contempt—there is a high likelihood that the observer of an alien culture, even the observer well disposed to the object of his study, will experience bouts of revulsion. For the very conception that a culture is alien rests upon the perceived difference of that culture from one's own behavioral codes, and it is precisely at the points of perceived difference that the individual is conditioned, as a founding principle of personal and group identity, to experience disgust.

Early European accounts of foreign peoples are rich in the expression of revulsion, though one should note that this is by no means the only reaction, for the shifting codes of manners themselves bear witness to the mobility and learned character of "disagreeable thoughts." What is perhaps most striking in the early accounts—in Bernal Diaz del Castillo's description of the Aztec priests or Edmund Scot's account of the Javanese—is the undisguised openness of revulsion, a revulsion that often coexists with understanding and admiration.[5] One should add that the natives' response to the first Europeans, insofar as it is recorded, provides evidence of a comparable reaction: one Amerindian, astonished at the French custom of collecting and carrying about mucus in handkerchiefs, wryly declared: "If thou likest that filth, give me thy handkerchief and I will soon fill it."[6] The rise of "scientific" methodology brought about the systematic suppression of the articulation of disgust in ethnographic writing, but as Malinowski's diaries eloquently attest, the experience itself remained quite strong and underlay pursuit of the objective knowledge of the other. Here too the response could be reciprocal: when Malinowski ventured to suggest to the Trobriand islanders that they should discipline recalcitrant children by beating them, the islanders considered the idea "unnatural and immoral."[7]

All of this returns us to Captain Bourke, who witnessed among the Zuñi Indians extreme and simultaneous violations of the codes governing food and waste, and hence experienced extreme disgust. This reaction is not simply an occupational hazard; after all, it is the ethnographer's nausea that gives him his particular discursive field. The boundaries of his long study are defined precisely by the rising of his gorge; thus *Scatologic Rites* includes the consumption of garlic and hashish as well as earwax and sweat. In the absence of a stable and universal enumeration of those things that must be regarded as filthy, Bourke relies upon the felt distance between himself and aspects of the world to provide him with his subject matter, and that distance is registered in the level of his disgust. His disgust is, moreover, an affirmation of his own cultural

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

identity, a mark of his participation in that civilized world that takes the primitive as one of its characteristic intellectual and moral concerns, the very emblem of that which is alien.[8] It would be absurd to conclude that a similar, if better disguised, revulsion lies at the constitutive moment of *all* ethnography, but one may easily find other and more respectable instances than the work of Captain Bourke, in which aversion serves to transform behavior and material substances into the objects of representation and interpretation.

The ethnographic project that reflects this revulsion also helps to alleviate it, not necessarily because the attempt at understanding breeds tolerant acceptance—*Scatologic Rites* bears eloquent, if eccentric, witness that it need not—but because the act of recording assumes the eventual, perhaps imminent disappearance of the observed behavior. It is recorded in part because, as a survival of an earlier stage of human development, it cannot long endure; indeed, much early anthropology is engaged quite consciously in helping to bring about a more hasty demise. At the same time, the ethnographer's disgust often seems to be the other side of longing: it may be complacently psychoanalytical to say so, but there appears to be at least as much "philia" as phobia in Captain Bourke's ten-year labor, a kind of *nostalgie de merde*.

It is tempting to reverse this formulation for the Zuñis and to argue that there is as much disgust as relish in their coprophagous ritual. Captain Bourke's explanation is along these lines: citing Isaiah 36:12, he suggests that the abominable dance represents a catastrophic famine that the Zuñis had at some time, perhaps centuries earlier, endured during an enemy siege. But festivals that commemorate a national disaster—the Jewish Tisha b'Av would be an example—are not usually pervaded by the spirit of clowning, uncontrolled merriment, and, above all, malicious parody. The transcription of portions of a recent oral history project, *Self-Portrayals by the Zuñi People*, raises the possibility of a different semiotic relation between the dance and the Zuñis' historical experience, a relation not of commemoration, but of festive travesty. "Our grandparents," it is said, prophesied to their children that "drinkers of dark liquids will come upon the land, speaking nonsense and filth. Then the end shall be nearer."[9] Were the Ne'wekwe dancers, then, in the presence of the representatives of the conquering institutions, comically enacting the roles of their oppressors, displacing and absorbing alien cultural symbols in a ritual of mockery, warding off, as it were, eschatology with scatology?

Captain Bourke speculates that the dancers were recalling their ancient Apache enemies, but it seems far more likely that he himself was the object of their abusive mirth, along with all the other army officers and priests who tirelessly struggled to bring civilization to the heathen. One should perhaps add ethnographers, not only because of Captain Bourke's own dual function, but because an observer in 1918 noticed one of the dancers holding a ceremonial stave composed of cattails, cornstalks, and the measuring stick that Alfred Kroeber had used in a survey three years before.[10]

The Ne'wekwe ceremony cannot, however, be reduced to its element of mockery; after all, if the filth is symbolically directed at the white man, it is swallowed by the Indians. The gesture of insult is at the same time an acknowledgment of defeat, for the satiric humor of the oppressed, no matter how telling it may be, always assumes the condition of oppression, perhaps

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

even reinforces that condition, both by releasing aggression nonviolently through laughter and by confirming in the minds of the conquerors the impotence of the conquered. And yet this duality may not be the most important point, for we may recall that the ritual is conceived as powerful medicine, the most powerful known to the Zuñi people.[11] I would like to argue not that this medical function explains, or is explained by, the dialectic of aggression and submission, but rather the reverse: the elements are not fully integrated, they defy hierarchical organization, they do not form a unified whole. Somehow the magical healing has survived alongside all of the portentous significance of the encounter with white civilization, and has resisted semantic organization by that encounter. In this indifference to unity, this refusal of conceptual integration, we may grasp one of the sources of the Zuñis' dogged resistance, to this day, to assimilation.

Where does this leave Captain Bourke? Beside the point, I suppose—not, as it seemed, the symbolic center of the ceremony, but utterly marginal. Yet if he found no place in Zuñi culture, he may have encountered something important about his own. I refer now not to his disgust, but rather to his very shrewd speculation that what he had witnessed bore a striking resemblance to the accounts of the Feast of Fools in early modern Europe. For him, this resemblance could only signify the "filth taint" from which his own culture had cleansed itself, but our understanding of the Feast of Fools has been deepened in the last decades, especially by the Russian semiologist Mikhail Bakhtin's brilliant study, *Rabelais and His World*.[12]

Laughter, Bakhtin suggests, which had been eliminated in the Middle Ages from official cult and ideology, survived in the unofficial, but widely tolerated, carnival aspect of virtually every feast. The festivities often included masking, hiding, parades, dancing, noise-making, gambling, and costuming: fools dressed as dignitaries, peasants as lords, men as women, women as men. Festive laughter—popular, universal, ambivalent in its triumph and derision, gaiety and degradation—has at its center what Bakhtin calls the "grotesque body," ever unfinished, ever creating, ever exceeding its limits in copulation, pregnancy, childbirth, dying, eating, drinking, and defecating. The grotesque body—open to the world in all its orifices, unbounded, abusive, devouring, and nurturing—receives its fullest visual representation in the art of Bosch and Breughel, its most masterful literary expression in Rabelais's *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Rabelais's scatology, Bakhtin suggests, must be understood in the context of rituals like the mock mass, in which excrement was used instead of incense, or processions in which the festive clergy, eating boudins, rode in carts loaded with dung and tossed it at the crowd. And, as we might expect in a writer who was both monk and doctor, the protagonists of these rituals are medical as well as clerical: the Rabelaisian image of the physician, Bakhtin writes, is an ambivalent composite of Hippocrates' noble physician and of the scatophage who devours excrement in antique comedies, mimes, and medieval *facéties*.

The comic force of Rabelais's scatological improvisations on carnivalesque themes is felt from the first pages of his work in the account of Gargantua's birth. The hero's mother, Gargamelle, has been carrying him in her belly for eleven months, when, after the slaughter of three hundred sixty-seven thousand

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

fourteen fat oxen, she indulges her voracious appetite at a feast of tainted tripe. Her husband warns her to eat modestly—"Anyone who eats the bag," he said, "might just as well be chewing dung"—but she consumes a vast amount: "Oh, what fine faecal matter to swell up inside her!"[13] After a frolicking dance and a drinking party, Gargamelle believes that she feels the first birth pangs. The midwives who reach underneath find "some rather ill-smelling excrescences, which they thought were the child; but it was her fundament slipping out because of the softening of her right intestine—which you call the bum-gut—owing to her having eaten too much tripe." In response, "a dirty old hag of the company who had the reputation of being a good she-doctor" applies an astringent "so horrible that all her sphincter muscles were stopped and constricted." "By this misfortune," the narrator continues, "the cotyledons of the matrix were loosened at the top, and the child leapt up through them to enter the hollow vein. Then, climbing through the diaphragm to a point above the shoulders where this vein divides in two, he took the left fork and came out by the left ear." The newborn does not cry like other babies, but instead shouts, "Drink! Drink! Drink!"

This remarkable episode is in part an exuberant parody of classical legends of the birth of heroes; the narrator invokes Bacchus, Minerva, Adonis, and Castor and Pollux. We shall have occasion to return to this learned comedy, which it is all too easy to neglect in the context of the riotous popular festivities Bakhtin invokes. Those festivities often included, we have noted, parodies of the most sacred mysteries in the official religion, and Rabelais daringly pursues the same impulse: "I doubt whether you will truly believe in this strange nativity," the narrator remarks, "but an honest man, a man of good sense, always believes what he is told and what he finds written down." The first edition then continues with a passage that was suppressed in 1542 (and that is omitted from the Urquhart-Motteux translation and from J. M. Cohen's influential modern translation):

> Ne dict pas Solomon Proverbiorum 14: "Innocens credit omni verbo etc.," et Saint Paul, prime Corinthio. 13: "Charitas omnia credit." Pourquoy ne le croyriez vous? Pour ce (dictez vous) qu'il n'y a nulle apparence. Je vous dicz que pour ceste seule cause vous le debvez croyre en foy parfaicte. Car les Sorbonistes disent que foy est argument des choses de nulle apparence.[14]

This passage not only mocks the Paris theologians, as More and Erasmus had done a few years earlier, but goes very far toward mocking the miraculous nativity at the heart of Christianity itself. To be sure, such mockery could be accommodated, if somewhat uneasily, to the larger rhythms of faith: thus for centuries periodic outbursts of parodic festivity had been tolerated as a release of pent-up frustrations, a safety valve that would enable the participants to return with renewed obedience to the discipline of true faith. Moreover, in works of art such as the English *Second Shepherd's Play*, the element of parody—the lamb in the manger instead of the holy babe—could be viewed as a moving comic tribute to the Christian mystery.

Rabelais's parody of the sacred, however, cannot be so easily absorbed or domesticated. Gargantua is no lamb, and the overarching symbolic and institutional constraints that enclose the carnival and return its participants to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the everyday world are altogether missing from Rabelais's novel. Moreover, the mockery in the suppressed passage strikes at one of the central doctrinal tactics since St. Paul for the suppression of doubt: the definition of faith comically attributed to the Sorbonistes is from Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews. This definition was invoked to defend doctrines like the Virgin Birth and the Real Presence against the skeptical challenge of materialism; Rabelais's deadpan parody—"For I say to you that to God nothing is impossible"—is solemnly invoked as the justification for a grotesque hypermaterialism, the realm (in Bakhtin's phrase) of the "lower bodily stratum."

Rabelais's exuberant laughter turns the world topsy-turvy, challenges the dominant structures of authority, triumphs over fear and constraint, breaks down what had seemed essential boundaries. The birth of Gargantua celebrates a primal, animal energy, difficult to moralize conventionally and impossible to contain; when Gargamelle's sphincter muscles are closed, the infant—in a comic prefiguration of what Freud called "displacement upward"—forces his way through a different orifice. This miraculous birth is not transcendence of the human condition—*inter urinas et faeces nascimur*—but a radical confirmation in which the veins of the head, the birth canal, and the intestines are confounded with one another. Acts of degradation—including the eating of excrement—are linked inseparably with birth, fertility, renewal; acts of renewal are linked, in turn, with decay and death. The birth of Gargantua, Bakhtin writes, "ties into one grotesque knot the slaughter, the dismemberment and disemboweling, bodily life, abundance, fat, the banquet, merry improprieties, and finally childbirth" (p. 222).

With this blend of laughter, religious parody, and exuberant self-affirmation, and its carnivalesque context compounded of rebellion, celebration, humiliation, and excremental medicine, we are, as Captain Bourke dimly grasped, quite close to the Ne'wekwe dances. What he witnessed in a state of shock, and in the conviction of profound cultural distance, was something his own European and American forebears had relatively recently suppressed. What the Zuñis did to Bourke—brazenly performing filthy rites in his presence, mocking him under the pretense of doing him honor, making him at once comically central and yet in a deeper sense quite peripheral—Rabelais in effect did again and again to the Sorbonists, who responded by trying to destroy him and suppress his book. Indeed, the Indian fighter/ethnographer's response to the savages, a response composed of disgust, self-congratulation, and obscure, nostalgic longing, strikingly resembles the response of the European elite to the unreformed carnivalesque customs of the lower orders. The connection is perfectly explicit as early as the sixteenth century, and had important historical consequences; as Karen Kupperman has recently demonstrated, colonial policy in Virginia was deeply conditioned by the widespread notion that the natives resembled the common people of England, Algonkian culture being a curious anamorphic representation of European popular culture.[15]

But we must caution ourselves at this point against simply equating Renaissance popular culture with Rabelais's novel: *Gargantua and Pantagruel* is not carnival, but the brilliant aesthetic representation of carnival motifs; not the communal laughter of a largely illiterate populace, but the highly crafted, classicizing comedy of a supremely literate individual; not festive mayhem in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the streets, but words on a page. The difference—like the difference between the traditional Whitsun-ale an Englishman could still have seen in 1611 in dozens of country villages, and the Whitsun-ale he could have seen represented at the Globe Theater in *The Winter's Tale*—signals as much the break away from the festive mode as its continued vigor. Though they would not vanish until quite late—despite the efforts of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, there are records of wakes and popular fairs in England until well into the nineteenth century—the Feast of Fools and other carnivalesque recreations had come under increasingly effective attack in the Renaissance from clerical authorities, social reformers, city fathers, popular preachers, and significant elements of the folk itself.[16] Rabelais does not seem to share in any way our ethnographer's revulsion, but his act of recording implies the evanescence, as well as the aesthetic and social power, of the popular rituals from which his art draws its inspiration.

Indeed, some of Rabelais's power derives *from* the evanescence of the festive tradition, or more accurately, from the sense of a literary, social, and religious world hardening in its commitment to order, discipline, and decorum. In the realm of manners, bodily functions that had been largely ignored come under increasing scrutiny and regulation; in the family, patriarchal authority is asserted with a new and intense insistence, while children are subjected to increased disciplinary attention; in religion, a sharp intensification of dogmatic rigidity is fueled by the crisis of the Reformation; in literature, there is a growing self-consciousness about decorum. Rabelais's work must be understood not as the naive self-expression of an unregenerate popular spirit, but as a sophisticated and brilliant response to such developments: hence the grotesque violations of "good manners," the hyperbolic celebration of the unconstrained instinctual energies of childhood, the mockery of the theological rage for order, the comic breaches of literary decorum. Rabelais's festive representations derive at least some of their intensity from this new agonistic situation: not Carnival in its recurrent, cyclical struggle with Lent, but the carnivalesque threatened in its very existence. The excessiveness and the dense particularity of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* are in compensatory relation to the long day's dying of all that Rabelais hyperbolically depicts.

So too in just this period, European humanists begin to compile vast collections of folk proverbs, and the attention, even when closer to admiration than amused contempt, reflects less the continued vitality of popular culture than its slow contraction into an object of learned study, literary representation, and pastoral reform.[17] Rabelais shows no interest in reforming the people, but his work has a certain quality of inspired compilation, as if to suggest that from now on the carnivalesque will live more authentically and fully in the pages of *Gargantua and Pantagruel* than in actual folk experience. And this proposition is inadvertently confirmed when Bakhtin draws virtually all of his best evidence for the realm of the "grotesque body" from this novel written by a highly learned humanist/monk/physician writing under the protection of aristocratic, clerical, and royal patrons.

The folk culture forged by Rabelais into a devastating comic weapon is in effect presented to those patrons, as scatological and bawdy tales were traditionally presented, alongside chivalric romances and allegories of love, to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the aristocratic audiences of the Merovingian court.[18] The presence of the book's noble protectors is registered not only in the circumstances of its composition and publication, but in some of its most characteristic values as well. Thus, when in the famous description of the Abbey of Thélème, Rabelais imagines a world of freedom and delight, he does so, not as a peasant dream of abundance, but as an elegant aristocratic retreat, comically reconceived as a monastery. The monks and nuns are all "free, well-born, well-bred, and easy in honest company," and their elegant lives are simplified and sweetened by armies of servants in discreet attendance: "These attendants also provided the ladies' rooms each morning with rose-water, orange-water, and myrtle-water, and brought for each lady a precious casket, which breathed of every aromatic scent" (p. 156). The excremental aggression and reckless exuberance have vanished, as if they were only called into being by resistance and constraint. In a world whose sole rule is "*Do what you will*," excrement is completely transformed, as Artemidorus's ancient dream interpretation had foretold, into showers of superfluous wealth: gold, precious jewels, costly clothes, and those sweet-smelling caskets.[19]

Rabelais's fantasy of perfect aristocratic liberty, like his fantasy of unending popular carnival, is generated in response to a culture increasingly intolerant of disorder in society, in the individual, and in art. Scatology, of course, did not vanish—indeed, its endurance has surpassed that of the aristocracy—but what Norbert Elias calls "the threshold of shame and embarrassment" altered, so what was once acceptable in the central zone of the social system was pushed out to the periphery, and what was once tolerated on the periphery was declared altogether unacceptable. The expurgation of Rabelais's novel began in his own lifetime, and the process of cleansing extended, of course, well beyond this single scandalous French text. Shakespeare's distinguished eighteenth-century editor Warburton, to cite one of the more subtle examples, proposed a decorous textual emendation: where, in the folio text of the tragedy, Cleopatra, contemplating suicide, declares that it is great "to do that thing that ends all other deeds . . . Which sleeps, and never palates more the dung" (V. ii. 5-7), he suggests that Shakespeare had intended to write, "and never palates more the dug"—that is, the nipple. Excrement is transformed into milk.[20]

But conscious or unconscious attempts at bowdlerizing are probably less significant than disciplinary pressures brought to bear upon scatology itself and consequent changes in the symbolic significance of the "lower bodily stratum." In Rabelais, as in the Ne'wekwe dances, excrement was the material sign of abundance as well as humiliation, magical medicine as well as corruption, renewal as well as death. From the early Renaissance onward, such paradoxical doubleness is more and more widely repudiated, and then repressed, so that by the nineteenth century, it is recoverable only in ethnographic descriptions of savage rituals. In England, this transformation may be traced at the symbolic center of society in the history of the royal Privy Chamber. During the reign of Rabelais's contemporary, Henry VIII, the working head of the Privy Chamber was a high-ranking and influential gentleman, called the Groom of the Stool, whose status originated in his duty to attend on the king when he made use of the royal close-stool. This attendance signaled the groom's publicly acknowledged intimacy with the king, an intimacy that conferred power not only by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

virtue of the king's evident confidence, but by virtue as well of a charisma that extended even to the basest functions of the king's body. By the later seventeenth century, that charisma had drastically waned, and royal body service had begun to seem an embarrassment. As early as 1669, a writer on court offices solemnly explained that the correct title of the First Gentleman of the Bedchamber was Groom of the Stole, "he having the office and honour to present and put on his Majesty's first garment or shirt every morning."[21] By the eighteenth century, the office had become a sinecure having little or nothing to do with the king's body, and at the accession of Victoria, the groomship was abolished altogether in an attempt to reduce costs.

This brief history reflects not only the waning of royal charisma, but a separation of body and spirit whose implications extend well beyond the fate of the monarchy. In this separation, the "lower bodily stratum" steadily loses any connection with renewal and potency, except in the increasingly disreputable dreams of alchemists and cranks. Eventually, all of the body's products, except tears, become simply unmentionable in decent society, but long before this repression, scatology is reconceived symbolically, so that it can have none of the festive ambivalence it possesses in Rabelais's novel or in the Zuñi ceremony. We may glimpse this refiguration in Thomas More's *Utopia*, written at a time, we may recall, when Henry VIII's Groom of the Stool derived prestige from his important function and would be rewarded, at the king's death, with the precious collection of royal close-stools.[22] While the Utopians, More writes,

> eat and drink from earthenware and glassware of fine workmanship but of little value, from gold and silver they make chamber pots and all the humblest vessels for use everywhere. . . . Moreover, they employ the same metals to make the chains and solid fetters which they put on their slaves. Finally, as for those who bear the stigma of disgrace on account of some crime, they have gold ornaments hanging from their ears, gold rings encircling their fingers, gold chains thrown around their necks, and, as a last touch, a gold crown binding their temples. Thus by every means in their power they make gold and silver a mark of ill fame.[23]

In More's dream of a communal society, a society with neither charismatic absolutism nor private property, men can be freed from excessive, anxious attachment to wealth by means of the social power of shaming. Defecation is used, along with slavery and disgrace, to stigmatize gold and silver, and these metals, bearing the weight of the communal judgment, may subsequently be used elsewhere to symbolize dishonor.

The "lower bodily stratum" plays an important role, then, in the technology of social control that makes possible Utopian communism, but we should not conclude that the values of More's imaginary society revolve around a loathing of the flesh such as we find in certain strains of medieval monasticism. Utopia is not an ascetic community but one officially dedicated to the pursuit of pleasure, including the humblest pleasures of the body. All pleasures are, however, carefully ranked in an order that represents the objective standard of the community and permits no individual deviation. At the top of the hierarchy are the pleasures of the soul; below are the bodily pleasures, which the Utopians divide into two general categories. The first is "a calm and harmonious state of the body," that is, the pleasure of overall good health; the second is the pleasure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the senses. This latter is in turn divided into two kinds: the intangible, but sweet, pleasure of music; and the pleasure of the body's organs. And this last and lowest form of pleasure is also divided into two parts: pleasure that arises from renewal, that is, from eating and drinking; and the pleasure that arises from elimination. The latter sensation "occurs when we discharge feces from our bowels or perform the activity generative of children or relieve the itching of some part by rubbing or scratching."[24] The Utopians, then, embrace bodily pleasures, but they do so in a scheme that seems designed to curb sexuality by equating it with defecation and scratching. As so often happens in More's Utopia, what is at first heralded as a central value turns out, on closer inspection, to be hedged about with restrictions:

> If a person thinks that his felicity consists in this kind of pleasure, he must admit that he will be in the greatest happiness if his lot happens to be a life which is spent in perpetual hunger, thirst, itching, eating, drinking, scratching, and rubbing. Who does not see that such a life is not only disgusting but wretched? (p. 101)

In More's representation of the pleasures of the body, there is none of the festive excess, the mingled degradation and exuberance, that characterize Rabelais's scatological representation. For More, the instinctual demands of the flesh take their appointed place in a great, integrated social body, into which every individual must merge himself. Utopia is in this respect the secular equivalent of the Catholic *corpus Christianorum*, for which More gave his own life. In More's Christianity, the body is not utterly despised, but it is subordinated to higher values, the values embodied in the universal, visible Catholic Church. In the service of this ultimate authority, even the grossest bodily functions must play their part, that of the agents of shame and disgrace. During the years of violent religious controversy in England, More calls upon those functions to bear the full charge of aggression against any individual who dares to challenge the Catholic consensus. Writing on behalf of Henry VIII, More tells Luther that

> as long as your reverend paternity will be determined to tell these shameless lies, other will be permitted, on behalf of his English majesty, to throw back into your paternity's shitty mouth, truly the shit-pool of all shit, all the muck and shit which your damnable rottenness has vomited up, and to empty out all the sewers and privies onto your crown.[25]

More is not inaccurate when he claims to be throwing back at Luther something Luther himself threw with reckless abandon. Significantly, More speaks for his ruler and in his opponent's idiom; Luther speaks for himself, and his scatological imagery far exceeds in quantity, intensity, and inventiveness anything that More could muster. If for More scatology normally expresses a communal disapproval, for Luther, it expresses a deep personal rage. This rage has many external objects, from the pope and his bishops ("They are no part of the body, or clean and healthy members but merely the filth of squiredom, merd spattered on the sleeve and veritable ordure"[26]) to the Jews ("You should read only the bible that is found under the sow's tail, and eat and drink the letters that drop from there"[27]). But all of these hated enemies—priest,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

temporizing princes, rebellious peasants, usurers, Jews—resolve themselves into a single, supreme enemy, the Devil.[28] For Luther, the Devil dwells in excrement, and his dominion over the world is made possible by the world's excremental character: its obsession with gold and silver, its lies and trickery, its filthy desires. If the Devil assaults with excrement—"A Christian should and could be gay, but then the devil shits on him"—so too the Christian must counterattack with excrement: "For note this down," Luther tells Satan, "I have shit in the pants, and you can hang them around your neck and wipe your mouth with it."[29]

Powerful psychohistorical explorations by Norman O. Brown and by Erik H. Erickson of Luther's "excremental vision" have enabled us to understand this extraordinary scatological language, not as the incidental reflection of the reformer's peasant origins, but as a central element in Luther's conception of the world and of himself. In the present context, we can begin to understand that Luther's symbolic use of the "lower bodily stratum" is set against both the festive celebrations of the grotesque body expressed by Rabelais and the communal judgments expressed by More. If in these expressions Rabelais and More reflect conflicting aspects of Catholic culture in the late Middle Ages and early Renaissance, so Luther's scatology is powerfully linked to early Protestantism: there is, in short, a telling difference between the Catholic and Protestant semiotics of excrement. Where the excremental in Rabelais is bound up with renewal as well as decay, in Luther it is a sign of the Church's corrupt compromise with pagan idolatry and evil. Where Rabelais cheerfully acknowledges an ineradicable connection between human ideals and man's grossest functions, Luther regards that connection as proof of man's depravity, and proclaims that salvation lies only in God's utter eradication of the filth taint. Where defecation in More is a necessity that God has rendered mildly, if embarrassingly, pleasurable, it is for Luther a mark of sinfulness and spiritual violence, though the violence can be turned back against the enemy. Most significantly perhaps, where scatology in More is part of an institutional rhetoric—an agent of the shared wrath of the visible *consensus fidelium* against heresy, or a device in the Utopians' collective dishonoring of gold and silver—scatology in Luther is part of a personal vision, a weapon in the struggle of an isolated believer against Satan, or an expression of the inward state of the individual fleshly man. For More, the emotion principally associated with excrement is shame; for Luther, it is not shame, the social sense of disgrace in the eyes of the community, but guilt. When Luther looks into himself, that is, into his natural inwardness unaided by divine grace, what he perceives is filth: "I am like ripe shit, and the world is a gigantic ass-hole. We probably will let go of each other soon."[30] There is intense self-loathing in this excremental vision—a nauseated perception of utter worthlessness and damnation—but there is also a paradoxical self-importance, a sense of the immensity of individual depravity that makes possible a corresponding sense of the immensity of God's mercy in cleansing man of his guilt.

With shame and guilt, communal regulation and individual anxiety, we have the two forces that between them will stamp out over the ensuing centuries almost all popular manifestations of the "grotesque body." Yet it will not do to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

conclude simply that a repressive disciplinary scatology destroyed the radical, liberated excrementalism represented in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*. Out of the midst of his unbridled, carnivalesque exuberance, the energies of the "lower bodily stratum," Rabelais produced the aristocratic fantasy of the Abbey of Thélème; out of the midst of their conservatism and repressiveness, More and Luther generated and inspired some of the most radical social thought of the early modern period. We may glimpse, before we close, a daring attempt by one seventeenth-century visionary to forge a liberating social and religious practice out of ideological materials, including scatology, drawn from More and Luther.

On April 1, 1649, a half-dozen poor men began to dig on the common land at St. George's Hill, Surrey, to prepare the ground for planting. They were followers of Gerrard Winstanley, to whom, in a trance, a voice had come, saying, "Worke together, Eat bread together."[31] The actions of these men and women—and the group, known as the Diggers, quickly grew—were modest and scrupulously nonviolent, but their project, like others undertaken by religious radicals in the wake of the execution of Charles I, were millennial: "That we may work in righteousness and lay the Foundation of making the Earth a Common Treasure for All, both Rich and Poor" (p. 257). To this end, the Digger community outlawed private property and wage labor, struggled to overturn the patriarchal oppression of women and children, shared their goods in common, and attempted to live exemplary, decent lives, free from fear, subservience, and hunger:

> Therefore we are resolved to be cheated no longer, nor be held under the slavish fear of you no longer, seeing the Earth was made for us, as well as for you. . . . If we lie still, and let you steale away our birthrights, we perish; and if we Petition we perish also. . . . Therefore we require, and we resolve to take both Common Land, and Common woods to be a livelihood for us, and look upon you as equal with us, not above us (p. 273).

The project drew from local freeholders and magistrates immediate and predictable hostility, to which Winstanley responded in a remarkable series of pamphlets explaining and defending his "experimental" religion (p. 93) and social reform. In the beginning of time, he writes, "there was an evenness between man and all creatures, and an evenness between man and his Maker" (p. 156). But when man fell, he began to imagine that all of his happiness lay in possessing external objects for himself, tyrannizing over others, enclosing the earth, enriching himself with the labor of his fellows, and upholding by force the principle, "*This is mine*" (p. 158). The fall is at once an inward condition and a specific set of external injustices, a spiritual darkness and a social evil. Hence, there can be no personal righteousness without a transformation of the oppressive circumstances in which the common people live, and no lasting social reform without inward salvation.

Man can be ruled, Winstanley writes, by "a particular, confining, selfish power, which is the Devil," or by "a universall spreading power, that delights in the liberty of the whole Creation, which is Christ" (p. 172). The Devil does not dwell in an external hell, but in the "bottomless pit, your very fleshly self," and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

all torments and miseries are "but the breakings forth of that stinking dunghill, that is seated within you" (p. 216). The whole of mankind can be conceived as a great creature, whose "face is called the universal power of Love," but whose "back parts is called the selfish power" (p. 376). All men and women have an equal birthright in the earth, but under the dominion of the "back parts," men have enslaved each other, while through buying and selling, "the earth stinks, because this hath been established by a compulsive binding power" (p. 188). The earth must be made clean again by returning to it those things that belong by "the Law of Creation" to all mankind: "Be not like the Rats and Mice, that drawes the treasures of the Earth into your holes to looke upon, whil'st your fellow-members . . . doe starve for want" (p. 448). All that is locked up covetously becomes inner filth, and at the appointed time, those who are ruled by the dark power of possessiveness "must and shall be torne in pieces, and scattered, and shamed; . . . and be cast out, as stinking, imaginary dung" (p. 447). To avoid this fate, men and women, governed by "the Spirit of Community," must come together "to plant and manure the Common land" (p. 274), so that the poor may once again "suck the Brests of their mother Earth" (p. 265). "The voyce is gone out," Winstanley writes, "freedome, freedome, freedome: he that hath eares to heare, let him heare, he that is filthie, let him be filthie still, till he be cast out as dung" (p. 448).

If we consider the excremental imagery scattered throughout Winstanley's writings not as a psychic aberration but as part of a continuing social dialogue about body, spirit, property, and power, we can understand that he is trying to fuse, in a revolutionary synthesis, elements of the bitterly opposed visions expressed by More and Luther. He shares with Luther the perception that covetous men are dominated by the "back part"—the "dunghill" within—and that this "back part" is in fact the Devil. But for Winstanley, this perception is not an acknowledgment of universal depravity, the worthlessness of human "works," and his own personal guilt. Instead, he shares with More a conviction that communal actions can arouse men's sense of shame, liberate them from their attachment to property, and return them to righteousness and peace. But for Winstanley, this conviction is not an adherence to any visible church or formal ritual or hierarchical institution, and he utterly rejects both the enslavement of criminals that More contemplated in *Utopia* and the persecution of heretics that More supported in his own life. Winstanley feels angry at his oppressors, but he struggles to transform scatological aggression into its opposite: not an inward feeling of love, but an active social practice—manuring the earth.

On June 11, 1649, four unarmed Diggers on St. George's Hill were set upon and severely beaten by two freeholders on horseback and a club-wielding gang of men in women's apparel. The cross-dressing was perhaps a disguise—though the magistrates were far more interested in prosecuting than in protecting the Diggers—but it was also a familiar and traditional emblem of the carnivalesque. The festive gesture seems calculated to deride the Diggers, to avoid the impression of an official military or judicial repression, to deprive them of the possibility of dignity in defeat, and to pit one conception of the common people against another. In the weeks of harassment and violence that followed, Winstanley acknowledged the symbolism: the fury of their enemies is so great, he writes,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> that they would not only drive away all the Cowes upon the ground, but spoyl the corn too, and when they had done this mischief, the Bayliffs, & the other . . . snapsack boyes went hollowing and shouting, as if they were dancing at a whitson Ale; so glad they are to do mischief to the Diggers, that they might hinder the work of freedome" (p. 335).

By the spring of 1650, the Diggers were destroyed. The old exuberant spirit of carnival, safely in the pay of the landlords, had played its part in the destruction.

References

[1]John G. Bourke, *Scatologic Rites of All Nations* (Washington, D.C.: Lowdermilk and Company, 1891), p. 4. The introductory pages of the present essay appeared in *University Publishing* 8 (1979): 5-6.

[2]Matilda Coxe Stevenson, "The Zuñi Indians," *U.S. Bureau of American Ethnology,* Annual Report, 1901-2, p. 437.

[3]Semen and menses are also, of course, the object of complex regulations, but rarely in behavior manuals. For a brilliant study of these manuals, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, translated by Edmond Jephcott (New York: Urizen Books, 1978; original German edition, 1939). On the cultural definition of filth, see Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (New York: Praeger, 1966).

[4]Erasmus, *De civilitate morum puerilium;* Giovanni della Casa, *Galateo;* Antoine de Courtin, *Nouveau traité de civilité*, quoted in Elias, *The Civilizing Process*, pp. 130, 131, 146.

[5]In a provocative essay, "Paradox and Limits in the History of Ethnology" (*Daedalus* 109 [1980]:73-91), James A. Boon challenges the conventional distinction between pre-Enlightenment prejudice and Enlightenment objectivity. He cites Darwin on the Fuegians: they were "quite naked . . . stunted in their growth, their hideous faces bedaubed with white paint, their skins filthy and greasy, their hair entangled, their voices discordant, and their gestures violent. Viewing such men, one can hardly make one's self believe that they are fellow-creatures" (p. 86).

[6]*The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*, edited by R. G. Thwaites (Cleveland: Burrows Company, 1896-1901), 47:297. The same correspondent reports that "some time ago a Savage, looking into a Frenchman's face with most extraordinary attention and in profound silence, suddenly exclaimed, after considering him a long time, 'Oh, the bearded man! Oh, how ugly he is!' " (47:287). See also Cornelius J. Jaenen, "Amerindian Views of French Culture in the Seventeenth Century," *Canadian Historical Review* 55 (1974): 261-91.

[7]Bronislaw Malinowski, *The Sexual Life of Savages in North-Western Melanesia* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1929), pp. 52-53. Malinowski remarks of the Trobriand pastime, during the *kwakwadu*, or amorous excursion, of eating the lice found in one's lover's hair, that it is "a practice disgusting to us and ill associated with love-making," but he quickly adds that to the Trobriands, "the idea of European boys and girls going out for a picnic with a knapsack full of eatables is as disgusting and indecent as their *kwakwadu* would be to a Puritan" (p. 327). See also Bronislaw Malinowski, *A Diary in the Strict Sense of the Term*, translated by Norbert Guterman (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1967).

[8]We may look beyond ethnography in this regard to the work of Bourke's great contemporary, Sigmund Freud, who speculates that the experience of revulsion at the intertwining of "excremental things" and "sexual things" leads to the splitting off of the conscious from the unconscious and hence to the human condition itself. ("The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life" [1912], in *Collected Papers*, edited by J. Riviere and J. Strachey, 5 vols. [New York: International Psycho-Analytical Press, 1924-50], 4:215). Freud knew Bourke's *Scatologic Rites*.

[9]*The Zuñis: Self-Portrayals*, translated by Alvina Quam (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1972), p. 3.

[10]Elsie Clews Parson, "Winter and Summer Dance Series in Zuñi in 1918," *University of California Publications in American Archaeology and Ethnology* 17 (1922): 189.

[11]In Freudian theory, the source of this powerful medicine is the infantile narcissistic project of becoming father of oneself; in Norman O. Brown's words, "The project of becoming father of oneself and thus triumphing over death, can be worked out with things, and at the same time retain bodily meaning, only if the things produced by the body at the same time nourish it" (*Life Against Death* [New York: Vintage Books, 1959], p. 293).

[12]Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, translated by Helene Iswolsky (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1968).

[13]François Rabelais, *The Histories of Gargantua and Pantgruel*, translated by J. M. Cohen (Baltimore: Penguin, 1955), book 1, chapters 4-6, pp. 47-53.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[14]Rabelais, *Oeuvres*, edited by Abel Lefranc, 6 vols. (Paris: Champion, 1913), I:72. "Does not Solomon say, in Proverbs 14, 'The simple believeth every word etc.,' and St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 13, 'Charity believeth all things.' Why should you not believe what I tell you? Because, you say, there is no evidence. I tell you that for this reason alone you ought to believe with perfect faith. For the gentlemen of the Sorbonne say that faith is the evidence of things not seen."

[15]Karen Kupperman, *Settling with the Indians: The Meeting of English and Indian Cultures in America, 1580-1649* (Totowa, N.J.: Rowman and Littlefield, 1980).

[16]See Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society, 1700-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

[17]See Natalie Zemon Davis, "Proverbial Wisdom and Popular Errors," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 227-67.

[18]See Per Nykrog, *Les Fabliaux: Etude d'histoire littéraire et de stylistique mediévale* (Copenhague: E. Munksgaard, 1957); *Bawdy Tales from the Courts of Medieval France*, translated and edited by Paul Brians (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), pp. vii-x.

[19]In dreams, according to Artemidorus of Daldis, human excrement is both a sign of dishonor and a sign of the release of retained surpluses of wealth (*The Interpretation of Dreams*, translated by Robert J. White, Noyes Classical Studies [New Jersey: Noyes Press, 1975], pp. 106, 171). I owe this reference to Peter Brown. Rabelais refers to Artemidorus's volume in *Gargantua and Pantagruel*, book 3, chapter 13.

[20]The modern editor of the Pelican edition leaves "dung," but suggests as a gloss, "i.e., the fruits of the earth."

[21]David Starkey, "Representation Through Intimacy: A study in the symbolism of monarchy and court office in early-modern England," in *Symbols and Sentiments: Cross-Cultural Studies in Symbolism*, edited by Joan Lewis (London: Academic Press, 1977), p. 218.

[22]Ibid., p. 205. For a zany and learned meditation of Elizabethan close-stools, see Sir John Harington, *The Metamorphosis of Ajax* (1596), edited by Elizabeth Story Donno (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962).

[23]St. Thomas More, *Utopia*, edited by Edward Surtz, S.J. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1964), p. 86.

[24]*Utopia*, p. 173. The linking of excretion with other types of "evacuation" was evidently medical, as well as moral, wisdom. Robert Burton connects feces with sex, sweat, menstruation, and nosebleed, and remarks that it is dangerous to attempt to stop any of these too suddenly. "The extremes being both bad, the medium is to be kept, which cannot easily be determined." (*The Anatomy of Melancholy*, edited by Holbrook Jackson, 3 vols. (London: Dent, 1932), 2:34.

[25]*Responsio ad Lutherum*, in *The Complete Works of St. Thomas More*, edited by John M. Headley, translated by Sister Scholastica Mandeville (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), 5:1, p. 311.

[26]Quoted in Brown, *Life Against Death*, p. 225.

[27]"On the Jews and Their Lies (1543), in *Luther's Works*, edited by Helmut T. Lehmann, 55 vols. (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971), 47:212.

[28]Thus, for example, "Wherever you see a genuine Jew, you may with good conscience cross yourself and bluntly say: 'There goes a devil incarnate,' " *Luther's Works* 47:214.

[29]These and similar outbursts are from *Table Talk* (#522, #1557). As the English translation in *Luther's Works*, vol. 54, is deliberately colorless, I have followed the translation in Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther* (New York: Norton, 1958), pp. 244, 245. In Erikson's sensitive account, "Martin's tortured attempt to establish silence, self-restraint, and submission to the Church's authority and dogma had led to rebellious self-expression" (p. 245). I would only add that passages like those from the essay on the Jews are useful reminders of some of the external consequences of this internal drama.

[30]*Table Talk*, #5537, cited in Erikson, *Young Man Luther*, p. 206.

[31]*The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, edited by George H. Sabine (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1941; reissue by Russell & Russell, 1965), pp. 190. I am indebted throughout my discussion of Winstanley to George Shulman, "The Lamb and the Dragon: Gerrard Winstanley and Thomas Hobbes in the English Revolution" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, Department of Political Science, 1982).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JUDITH N. SHKLAR

Putting Cruelty First

MANY YEARS AGO, a deeply religious Roman Catholic friend said to me, with some irritation, "Why *must* you liberals bring everything down to cruelty?" What could he have meant? He was, and is, the most gentle and kindly of men, and a principled defender of political freedom and social reform. As a Christian, he obviously regarded cruelty as a dreadful vice. He was not defending cruelty or abandoning liberal politics; rather, he was explicitly rejecting the mentality that does not merely abhor brutality, but that regards cruelty as the *summum malum*, the most evil of all the evils. And he was reminding me that, although intuitively, most of us might agree about right and wrong, we also, and of far more significance, differ enormously in the way we rank the virtues and vices. Those who put cruelty first, as he guessed, do not condemn it as a sin. They have all but forgotten the Seven Deadly Sins, especially those that do not involve cruelty. Sins are transgressions of a divine rule and offenses against God; pride, as the rejection of God, must always be the worst one, which gives rise to all the others. Cruelty, as the willful inflicting of physical pain on a weaker being in order to cause anguish and fear, however, is a wrong done entirely to *another creature*. When it is marked as the supreme evil, it is judged so in and of itself, and not because it signifies a rejection of God or any other higher norm. It is a judgment made from within a world where cruelty occurs as part both of our normal private life and our daily public practice. By putting it irrevocably first—with nothing above it, and with nothing to excuse or forgive acts of cruelty—one closes off any appeal to any order other than that of actuality.

To hate cruelty with utmost intensity is perfectly compatible with biblical religiosity, but to put it *first* does place one unalterably outside the sphere of revealed religion. For it is a purely human verdict upon human conduct, and so puts religion at a certain distance. But while this tension is inherent in the decision to put cruelty first, it is not just religious skepticism that prompts this moral choice. It emerges, rather, from the recognition that the habits of the faithful do not differ from those of the faithless in their brutalities, and that Machiavelli had triumphed long before he had ever written a line. To put cruelty first, therefore, is to be at odds with both religion and politics. My Catholic friend perhaps thought all this through carefully, but I suspect that he merely sensed it, for I think few people have really considered most of the implications of putting cruelty first. That is why one might well investigate the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

matter more closely, and one way of illuminating it is to examine the most distinguished of those moralists who hated cruelty most of all, specifically Montaigne and his disciple Montesquieu.

Why should one hate cruelty with the utmost intensity? Montaigne thought it an entirely psychological question. He looked first of all into himself and found that the sight of cruelty instantly filled him with revulsion. It was a wholly negative reaction, for as he put it, "the horror of cruelty impels me more to clemency than any model of clemency could draw me on."[1] There was nothing positive here, no particular approval of charity or humane feeling. Indeed, he distrusted soft men: they tended to be unstable and easily became cruel. Cruelty, like lying, repels instantly, because it is "ugly." It is a vice that disfigures human character. We need not doubt Montaigne's word that he simply hated cruelty, and as he put it, "What we hate, we take seriously."[2] But although his loathing of cruelty was a personal choice, it was not random, nor did it occur in an intellectual or historical vacuum.

It is clear that well before he began to write his *Essays*, Montaigne had lost most of his faith in Christianity. The next step for him and his contemporaries was a return to the philosophers of classical antiquity, and Montaigne never ceased to depend on their wisdom. There was, however, a danger in this neo-paganism that he could not ignore. Given his sensibilities, he was bound to recognize that Machiavelli was also a refugee from Christian restraints, and that this most outspoken of enemies of revealed religion was also the foremost teacher of cruelty. It must have seemed to Montaigne that cruelty was everywhere, that it was the ubiquitous moral disease of Europe. He put it first among the vices, because it had become the most conspicuous and the least reformed evil, especially in the course of the then-current wars of religion. The first three of the *Essays* are, therefore, not surprisingly aimed at Machiavelli.

The opening one turns Machiavelli upside down. In *The Prince*, Machiavelli had asked whether it was more efficient for a self-made ruler to govern cruelly or leniently, and had decided that, on the whole, cruelty worked best. Montaigne raised the question that the prince's victims might ask: Was it better to plead for pity or to display defiance in the face of cruelty? There are no certain answers, he concluded. Victims have no certainties. They must cope, without guidebooks to help them. The second of the *Essays* deals with the sadness of those whose children and friends die. And the third suggests that one might take precautions against the terrors of princes. If there were an established review of the deeds of princes as soon as they died, their passion for posthumous fame might restrain them here and now. Even Machiavelli had noted that an indiscriminate butcher was not likely to enjoy the best of reputations in history, even if he should have succeeded in all his enterprises. Montaigne was only too aware of how cruel the passion for fame made ambitious princes, and he did not really place much hope in any restraining devices. But by reading *The Prince*, as one of its victims might, Montaigne set a great distance between his own and Machiavelli's classicism. Putting cruelty first was thus a reaction to the new science of politics. It did not reconcile Montaigne to revealed religion. Indeed, it only reinforced his conviction that Christianity had done nothing to inhibit cruelty. He could not even admit that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

his hatred of cruelty was a residual form of Christian morality. On the contrary, it only exacerbated his antagonism to established religiosity.

For Montaigne, and for Montesquieu after him, the failure of Christianity from a moral point of view was made perfectly manifest by the conduct of the Spaniards in the New World. Montaigne regarded them as the supreme example of the failure of Christianity. It preached a purer doctrine than any other religion but had less influence on human conduct. Mohammedans and pagans tended to behave better. What an opportunity was lost when the New World was discovered by Spaniards! How might the New World have flourished if Greek and Roman virtues had been introduced to the natives! Instead, there was unexampled slaughter for the sake of gold, with hypocritical talk of conversions to Christianity. For hypocrisy and cruelty go together, and are, as it were, unified in zeal. Zeal had taken the place of both religion and philosophy, and it works wonders "when it seconds our propensity to hatred, cruelty, ambition, avarice, detraction, rebellion," and the like.[3] This indictment went well beyond the tradition of Christian reformers who had always invoked the memory of Christ and the Apostles to rebuke a wayward Church. To Montaigne, the distance between profession and behavior appeared unbridgeable. Montesquieu, indeed, did use the image of a charitable Christ to shame a cruel Inquisitor, but only ironically, for he put the argument into the mouth of an Iberian Jew. For Montesquieu, the professions no longer mattered. All religions were to be treated as forms of social control—necessary, but not, on the whole, admirable. The Spaniards were, to be sure, "superbly Christian" as they went about their slaughter, but in fact they were like all other conquerors, past and present. But we are meant to feel more than a touch of disgust at this species of cruelty.

The Spaniards, as Montesquieu saw them, had created a new nightmare world. They had not only through prejudice renounced all gentle and humane feelings, but had also contrived to reorder reality. When they encountered a population with habits and an appearance unlike their own, they found it easy to say that God could not have put souls into such ugly bodies, that clearly those creatures lacked the higher rational qualities. Once the Spaniards had begun their cruelties, it became especially important to say that "it is impossible to suppose these creatures to be men, because allowing them to be men, a suspicion might arise that we were not Christian."[4] For both Montesquieu and Montaigne, the Spaniards in the New World served as the ultimate example of public cruelty. It was the triumph of Machiavellism by those who claimed to be its chief opponents. Here, cruelty and pious pretense had joined to prove Machiavelli right.

Because cruelty is made easier by hypocrisy and self-deception, they are bound to stand high on the list of vices that begins with cruelty. And in fact, Uzbek, the intelligent and cruel tyrant of Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, is typically self-deceived. He believes that the women who are tormented in his seraglio all love him, since they are all so unlike him. Dishonesty becomes here less a violation of truth than an aid to cruelty. And other traditional vices that are remote from cruelty did not shock Montesquieu at all. He was not disturbed by any manifestation of genuine affection, even if it was incestuous. And

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Montaigne regarded the knot of lying, treachery, malice, and cruelty as far worse than adultery, so much berated by other moralists. Lust, in fact, was not a fault at all. We are, Montaigne argued, made infinitely worse by our self-hatred in performing the most natural and necessary acts. What could be more appalling than to hide in the dark when we create a new life, while we destroy life with whoops of joy in broad daylight as we cry, "Kill, rob, betray"?[5] It was this transvaluation of values that took Montaigne well beyond the mere rejection of Christian doctrine. Indeed, it put him outside most of the conventions of his world. The contempt that Europeans felt for their physical nature was, in his view, just one more sign of mankind's general moral imbecility.

In spite of their own advice and habitual good humor, hatred of cruelty reduced both Montaigne and Montesquieu to a profound philosophical misanthropy. Montesquieu was a master of black humor and satire, while Montaigne had simple outbursts of loathing for his fellowman. In one essay of really concentrated disgust, he decided that it was better to laugh rather than cry at mankind, because the former "expresses more disdain," which is appropriate, since "we can never be despised more than we deserve." It is not even a matter of intelligent evil, but of inanity. "We are not so wretched as we are vile."[6] Misanthropy is surely one of the hazards of putting cruelty first. If it horrifies us, we must, given the facts of daily life, always be in a state of outrage, overwhelmed, like Hamlet, by the density of evil. Montaigne was neither so paralyzed nor so desperate as to suggest that mankind simply stop reproducing itself, but at times he could not think of a single thing to say in favor of humanity. For positive qualities, he therefore looked to those ultimate victims of human cruelty, the animals.

Animals are our moral superiors in every significant way, according to Montaigne. They seek only "tangible" and "attainable" goods, while we have only "wind and smoke" as our portion.[7] They have an unimpaired sense of reality, seeking only repose, security, health, and peace, while we pursue reason, knowledge, and renown, which bring us nothing but grief. With the exception of the bees, they want only to preserve themselves, and know nothing of war or terror. Phyrrho's pig, untroubled by a storm at sea, had no more ardent admirer. Montesquieu thought that, compared to the animals, we are nature's stepchildren, because animals do not seem "to make so bad a use of their passions" as we do.[8] But Montaigne thought that nature was entirely fair. We have only ourselves to blame for our follies and cruelties. Although he was devoted to Lucretius, he could not accept the latter's melancholy picture of nature's mindless destructiveness. That would have taken cruelty out of the realm of human choice and morality. Montaigne compared men to animals, not to condemn nature, but to reveal human folly. No greater mark of idiocy seemed imaginable than the doctrine that man was the best of creatures, destined to lord it over the vegetable and animal kingdom. The result is that we are encouraged to be cruel from our earliest years to plants and beasts. What in fact could be more absurd than that "this miserable and puny creature, who is not so much as master of himself . . . should call himself master and emperor of the universe"?[9] Such is the extremity of misanthropy to which one is driven if one looks at people through the eyes of our chief victims, plants and animals.

The need to escape from such a degree of misanthropy is particularly obvious if one is led to it by the hatred of cruelty. For loathing of one's kind and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of oneself is hardly the best cure for us. The temptation is therefore great not only to identify with the victims, but to idealize them and to attribute improbable virtues to them as well. That is how Montaigne came to overrate the animals and the peasants. Montesquieu overestimated the Jews, at least for the purposes of political argument. Dickens idolized children; Hawthorne, women. It is of course a perfect way to shame the cruel, but even more significantly, it is the only way to avoid the nausea of misanthropy. The saving virtues most becoming to a victim are fortitude and pride, and it is these that are usually ascribed to them. Pride may be a deadly sin for those who preach meekness, but it recommends itself to those who put cruelty first. Roxanne, one of Uzbek's wives in the harem, commits suicide both as a final act of defiance and to escape from the seraglio. In this she demonstrates not only her own courage, but also her superiority over her owner, who contemplates suicide because he is a bored and frustrated despot who wants to quit this life because his existence has no cosmic significance. His chatter is typical of a tyrant's self-importance, while her death is an act of heroic self-assertion and liberation.

Valor was for Montaigne the greatest virtue, even though he was often unsure of even that. He could dissociate it from aggression best by recognizing its perfection in defeated soldiers, but not in victorious ones. Only the Indian kings conquered by the marauding Spaniards display valor as a spiritual, rather than as a merely physical, quality. Their invincible courage is a dignified refusal to placate their conquerors, rather than just a desire to triumph. Peasants, another victimized group, live in resignation and die without making a fuss. That is also a form of valor. Montesquieu's Jews hold philosophical discourse in sight of the stake and openly hold fast to the faith of their fathers, without deceit. That was not their only virtue. They, and they alone, engaged in commercial activities in spite of Christian persecutions and prohibitions. They thus preserved for Europe the social activity most likely to save it from war and Machiavellism. For the spirit of commerce is the spirit of peace. Montaigne in an earlier age would not have understood this improbable hope. He found it peculiarly horrible that the Spaniards had turned a beautiful country upside-down merely "for a traffic in pearls and pepper."[10] For him, only pure, aristocratic valor, courage as a style of life, was admirable and a claim to noble standing.

Valor is generous; it is the obverse of cruelty, which is the expression of cowardice. But more often, valor appears to be quite indifferent to others, for its aim is self-perfection. It serves to satisfy a heroic self-image. It can be an extreme individualism, but in its military context, Montaigne saw it occasionally as a comradeship among brave men, and he admired it as he valued the company of his peers. He could do this without considering the purposes that brought them together: war, which he despised. War, he wrote, is "a testimony of our imbecility and imperfection."[11] Montaigne was not the first or last man to be puzzled by the fact that the most brutal of all social enterprises should also be the occasion of so much personal nobility, fellowship, and courage.

Montaigne not only detested war, he particularly did not admire victors. Winning wars is entirely a matter of fortune. Unlike Machiavelli, he did not think that Fortune was a woman to be manhandled by determined and aggressive princes. Fortune, he thought, was the sum of uncontrollable and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unpredictable circumstances. Alexander the Great and Julius Caesar were merely its beneficiaries. Conquerors, in short, are deprived of all merit. Their victories are not due to their efforts or character. Only victims can rise to true fortitude, because Fortune has obviously deserted them. The glamour of glory is quite gone. What matters is how bravely one endures defeat. Putting cruelty first may in this way lead on to an ideology of heroic self-destruction. And indeed Socrates, as the dignified suicide, was Montaigne's ideal figure. Cato's showy act seemed to him very inferior.

There is surely something disturbing about idealizing the defeated. They also are pawns of Fortune, no better than her favorites. They are just losers. To favor them extravagantly is, however, a way of escaping from misanthropy and finding an ethos that, unlike revealed religion, leads neither to zeal nor to cruelty. Valor, as a defiant refusal to live as a slave or a victim, may be a recipe for isolation and potential suicide, but not for cruelty. It is the pride that saves. When Montaigne said, "It is fear that I stand most in fear of," he was thinking of both the victims and the victimizers.[12] Fear makes the latter cruel and increases the suffering of the former. If we could learn not to fear the void after death, killing would lose both its appeal and its apprehension. The infliction of pain would remain, and Montaigne insisted, over the explicit objections of the ecclesiastical authorities, that any punishment beyond mere killing was cruel. He seems, however, to have thought that a more rational view of death would do much to discourage cruelty generally. Montesquieu already knew better. Much as he admired the stoic temper, he did not think that a rational attitude to death would in any way decrease our cruelty. He thought it might be better if we thought of men as sentient rather than rational beings. Uzbek, his tyrant, is indeed a model of enlightened rationality, and free from any fears of the afterlife, but he is as cruel as the next despot. Valor in the face of death might be admirable, but it did not seem to Montesquieu to lessen mankind's murderous propensities. In either case, learning how to die is hardly a social virtue. And that generally may be one of the costs of putting cruelty first. It leads to an ethic for isolates.

There are other equally significant social ideas that emerge within this mental world, especially an easy acceptance of cultural variety and a negative egalitarianism. Since the most spectacular public brutalities are usually visited upon alien peoples, Montaigne and Montesquieu were bound to investigate the justifications offered for the slaughter and enslavement of barbarians. The oldest and most common argument has been that they are naturally inferior. Since nature was taken to issue rules of conduct, it was clear that she intended Europeans to enslave those lesser peoples whom she had marked out by color for that very purpose. Montaigne entirely agreed that nature was indeed our best guide to good conduct. It was therefore a matter of some importance to him whether the differences between cultures were indeed natural, and which cultures, if any, were inferior and superior, when judged in terms of their habitual cruelty.

Barbarism, he soon discovered, was anything that "does not fit in with our usages." Every people seems barbaric to some other tribe. Moreover, the endless multiplicity of customs and opinions that he loved to list proved that not one of them stood out as natural. All were human contrivances. There is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

nothing that is not decent or indecent somewhere. All are departures from nature's original simplicity, and their variety only proves how insignificant they are, for "nature puts to shame our vain and trivial efforts."[13] Customs as such are all equidistant from nature, and the differences are therefore unimportant in themselves. What does matter is who is cruel. Cannibals eat the flesh of dead people and we recoil in horror, but it is we who torture and persecute the living. Our pride is unwarranted. There are no naturally superior or inferior peoples, but arrogance and cruelty mark Europeans, not those whom they disdain as barbarians. There was, in fact, a vein of primitivism in Montaigne, but that is not necessary to his purpose. Montesquieu did not share it, and he no longer looked to nature for human standards at all. He nevertheless also used the variety of customs to undermine the pride of the European civilization. It was simply a matter of exposing the triviality of the excuses offered for the enormous harms inflicted on primitive peoples. "Because negroes prefer a glass necklace to gold . . . it is proven that they have no common sense."[14] American Indians trimmed their beards in an unfamiliar manner, so they were legally enslaved by the Spaniards. Unlike Montaigne, Montesquieu knew enough not to dwell on any fancied superiority of the native peoples. It was enough to show that no difference could ever justify cruelty. He had, moreover, another reason for wanting his readers to know and understand all the cultures. He really believed that "knowledge makes men gentle," just as ignorance hardens us.[15] Not the primitive, but the *supra*civilized may recover from cruelty after all.

All inferiority and superiority for Montesquieu were the creations of policy. Once we enslave aliens, whom in our ignorance we despise, we reduce them to inferiority. Slavery makes imbeciles, not the other way around. "Nothing makes one more like a beast than always to see free men without being oneself free."[16] Once they have been reduced by enslavement, cruelty acts to make the distance between owner and slave even greater. In Asia, Montesquieu claimed, black slaves were castrated to that end. And in his *Persian Letters*, black eunuchs are employed to maintain the steady flow of submission and dominance in the harem. They are the abject tools of their common owner, who rules all by remote control. If such social distances create the climate for cruelty, then a greater equality might be a remedy. Even Machiavelli had known that one cannot rule one's equals with cruelty, but only one's inferior subjects. Montesquieu occasionally admired those ancient democracies whose frugality and equality made the citizens unable or unwilling to lord it over one another. And Montaigne came to admire the simplicity of the peasantry, whose relations to one another, he thought, were better regulated than those of the nobility. But this was just a rejection of aristocratic competitiveness, not a reflection on inequality as a social situation. And indeed, neither Montaigne nor Montesquieu were at all disposed to treat social equality as a positive good. Inequality mattered insofar as it encouraged cruelty. Theirs was a purely negative egalitarianism, rooted in a suspicion of the paltry reasons offered to justify not merely inequality, but its worst consequences. Inequality moreover generates illusions. Montaigne thought that it dims our common sense so badly, that we forget that "the pedestal is no part of the statue."[17] There was more here than the usual complaint that we fail to value real merit because we are easily taken in by mere finery and trappings. What Montaigne feared was the pure

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

glamour of power, the show of valor that accompanies it, and the cruelty that both encourage. Montesquieu was, thanks to Versailles and all it stood for, obsessed by the politics of courtly power. The vacuum that surrounds the despot and separates him from his subjects is the condition of both the maximum of inequality and of cruelty. Nothing could, then, be more dangerous than the deification of political superiors. The desacralization of politics was, in fact, one of Montesquieu's chief objects. Equality was not required for that, and he preferred a hierarchical pluralism, although he did cherish one highly egalitarian institution, the jury chosen by lot. For juries determine the outcome of those occasions when the ordinary citizen is confronted by the criminal law. Negative egalitarianism is really a fear of the consequences of inequality and especially of the dazzling effect of power. It is an obvious result of putting cruelty first.

Not equality but modesty is the cure for arrogance. And no form of arrogance is more obnoxious than the claim that some of us are God's agents, his deputies on earth charged with punishing his enemies. It was, after all, in defense of the divine honor that all those heretics had been tortured and burned. Montaigne saw that torture had infected the entire official world, both secular and ecclesiastical. It had become the ubiquitous evil. Montesquieu, living in a relatively milder age, was still outraged by the judicial prosecution of sins and minor faults. That was partly because neither one believed in these sins any longer, but also because they put cruelty first. The crimes so brutally punished were not themselves acts of cruelty. They therefore appeared particularly unimportant precisely when put in contrast to the horrors of official torture. Montesquieu advised the courts to leave belief and sexual habits alone, and to concentrate on the serious business of protecting the security of life and property. Montaigne had no faith in even this kind of legal reform. He thought most laws useless, because general rules never really fit the actual diversity of individual cases, and most judicial procedures are so cruel, that they terrified law-abiding citizens without achieving much else. He and Montesquieu were at one, however, in insisting that the discretion of judges must be as limited as possible, both thereby expressing a considerable distrust of the judiciary in general. That should not surprise us. Both were, after all, experienced magistrates, who had spent years on the bench at Bordeaux. They did not trust any ruling class, certainly not their own.

The wisdom of experience only enhances the skepticism of those who put cruelty first. How could it be otherwise? The usual excuse for our most unspeakable public acts is that they are necessary. How genuine are these necessities, in fact? Neither Montaigne nor Montesquieu was blind to the imperatives of law and of reason of state, but they knew that much of what passed under these names was merely princely willfulness. To respond to danger is one thing, but necessity in the Machiavellian vocabulary means far more than that. It expresses a great confidence in controlling events once they have been intelligently analyzed. To master necessity is to rule. It is, together with the subduing of Fortune, quite within the power of an astute ruler. Once necessity has been mapped and grasped, it is just a matter of plotting and executing. This is the utopianism of efficiency, with all the cruelty and treachery that it invites. Montaigne thought that politics were far too chaotic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and uncertain to be managed according to any plan. He dismissed Machiavelli as being no more plausible than any other political schemer, and just as shortsighted as most. In short, Montaigne did not think these amoral arguments conclusive. They did not really amount to rational responses to any necessities. But when one doubts necessity, one doubts everything. If princes must commit atrocities, let them at least regret it and let them make some effort to avoid going to war in order to indulge some personal whim, Montaigne concluded. That amounts to throwing up one's hands in despair.

There is no temper that is less utopian than this sort of skepticism. "The world is incapable of curing itself; it is so impatient of the weight that oppresses it, that it only aims at getting rid of it, without considering the cost,"[18] Montaigne wrote. Montesquieu had more faith in legislation and social change, but he was no enthusiast. He wrote an account of a little utopian community in his novel. But even in this imaginary world, utopia appears only to prove that it must quickly end. Age and continuity are the best recommendations for institutions, not because they are anything but "barbarous" and "monstrous," Montaigne argued, but because "we wonderfully incline to the worst."[19] Most of our laws and customs are beneath contempt, but if we alter them, we only fall into instability and direct destruction, which might well be worse. A decent, but not excessive, loyalty to the existing order, without excuses, seemed to him the only way. To that extent he had chosen sides in the civil war, since it could not be avoided. But he remained fair to the opposition. As an admiring Emerson was to write of him, he found himself "equally at odds with the evils of society and with the projects that are offered to relieve them," and went on to say that he "denies out of honesty."[20] Honesty in this case meant that Montaigne saw no reason to suppose that changes in belief altered human behavior significantly. Those who have attempted to correct the world by new beliefs, he noted wearily, have only removed the surface vices; the essential ones have not been touched. The best religion, therefore, with peace in view, is the one into which one is born, the one most established in one's country, and that which one is most used to. This is not an attempt to disregard the enormous faults of existing ideologies and institutions. It is rather the recognition that the alternatives are no better. It is the conservatism of universal disgust, if it is conservatism at all. For in what sense can one be said to support an existing order of affairs if one cannot think of anything to say on its behalf except that it is there? It is an act of perfect dissociation, but not necessarily a retreat from the public world.

When one begins with cruelty, an enormous gap between private and public life seems to open up. It begins with the exposure of the feebleness and pettiness of the reasons offered for public enormities, and goes on to a sense that governments are unreal and remote from the actualities about which they appear to talk. It is not that private life is better than public: both are equally cruel. It is rather that one has a sense of the incoherence and discontinuity of private and public experience. Montesquieu thought that it was impossible that the good man and the good citizen should ever be the same. The two were inherently incompatible. The demands of social life and those of personal morality are simply different. This may cause us much unhappiness, but it cannot be altered. "It is one of the misfortunes of the human condition," he wrote, using Montaigne's celebrated phrase, that "legislators must act more

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

upon society than upon the citizens, and more upon the citizens than upon men."[21] He did not despair, because he believed that, on the whole, we can control our public life more effectively than our personal characters. The climate works directly upon us, and while its effects can be modified by forcing us into specific social directions, we do not as individuals really change. The English have an excellent constitution, are solid citizens, but perfectly awful people. They also suffer from incurable melancholia and suicidal tendencies. Laws can make collective life better or worse, but each of us is fundamentally unalterable, and morality is, at some point, a personal matter. He was in fact moved to optimism by believing politics and morality were wholly dissimilar, because laws made social reform possible without demanding a moral revolution that would be both impossible and tyrannical in the extreme.

To separate morals and politics in this way is to open the door to Machiavellism to a degree that was impossible and intolerable for Montaigne. He thought, in any case, that our ability to control our personal life, even if only in isolation, was greater than our collective existence where Fortune ruled. Human volition was simply reduced in politics, and public men are forced to perform abominations as if out of necessity. For Montaigne did not deny that there was much that was unavoidable in politics, but he would not call it right, and he wanted no part of it. And even when he was resigned to public cruelties, he could not quite accept them as inevitable. There had always been generous and great men who had avoided them. His mind was self-divided, a picture of distraction. Of his public career, he said that the mayor and Montaigne have always been two, very distinctly separated."[22] Montaigne, the mayor, had played a part on a stage as a matter of duty, and fulfilled its demands as best he could. He was not one of those fastidious souls who preserve their inner purity by shunning politics altogether. As mayor, he tells us, he did as little as possible, a policy that he defended as the least harmful course of action available to him. He obviously felt more helpless in public offices than in his library, but there was for him no moral difference. Loyalty remained the same under all circumstances. He would not betray his prince for a private individual, but neither would be betray the latter for the sake of the prince. Epaminondas seemed to Montaigne particularly admirable because he would not kill in battle an enemy who had once been his guest. Nevertheless, the irrelevance of goodness in politics did impress him deeply. Let princes be just; if they tried to be magnanimous, they would only be arbitrary. Moreover, society did not depend on personal virtue for its survival. A society of complete villains would be glued together just as well as ours, and would be no worse in general. Not morality, but physical need and laws, even the most ferocious, keep us together. After years of religious strife, Montaigne's mind was a miniature civil war, mirroring the perpetual confusion of the world. But his jumble of political perceptions reflected not intellectual failure, but a refusal to accept either the comforts of political passivity or of Machiavelli's platitudes.

There has been in recent years a considerable literature on Machiavelli, most of it admiring his most "realistic" pages. I have tried to present the views of those who rejected him, not because they were moved by religious or moral illusions, but because they were *more* realistic, had read Plato's remarks about dirty hands *more* carefully, and were *more* honest. This is a position that goes

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

well beyond anything one can call liberalism. My Catholic friend was wrong in thinking that putting cruelty first amounts to just that, but he was quite correct in seeing that it is incompatible with his faith. What he should have asked is, how many people, excepting Montaigne, are really prepared to accept all the consequences of doing so. It has been my purpose to show at least what it might involve.

REFERENCES

This paper was originally delivered at the Lionel Trilling Seminar at Columbia University on April 2, 1981. I would like to thank my friends Stanley Cavell, Harry Hirsch, and Stephen Holmes for their help and encouragement. All references to Montaigne are first to *Oeuvres complètes (O)*, edited by Albert Thibaudet and Maurice Rat (Paris: Pleiade, 1962). The translations are those of *The Essays of Montaigne*, by E. J. Trechmann (E), (New York: Oxford University Press, n.d.). All references to Montesquieu are to *Oeuvres complètes*, edited by Andre Masson, (Paris: Nagel, 1950). The translations are my own.

[1]*Of the Art of Conversing*, III, 8, *(O)* 900, (*E*, vol. 2) 383.
[2]*Of Democritus and Heraclitus*, I, 50, *(O)* 291, (*E*, vol. 1) 296.
[3]*Apology for Raimond Sabond*, II, 12, *(O)* 421 (*E*, vol. 1) 434.
[4]*De l'Esprit des Lois*, XV, 5, vol. 1, 330-31.
[5]*On Some Lines of Vergil*, III, 5, *(O)* 825, (*E*, vol. 2) 303.
[6]*Of Democritus*, *(O)* 296, (*E*, vol. 1) 291.
[7]*Apology*, *(O)* 478, 483; (*E*, vol. 1) 464, 468.
[8]*Esprit*, I, i, vol. 1, 4.
[9]*Apology*, *(O)* 427, (*E*, vol. 1) 441.
[10]*Of Coaches*, III, 6, *(O)* 889, (*E*, vol. 2) 372.
[11]*Apology*, *(O)* 452, (*E*, vol. 1) 466.
[12]*Of Fear*, I, 18, *(O)* 76, (*E*, vol. 1) 71.
[13]*Of Cannibals*, I, 31, *(O)* 203-04, (*E*, vol. 1) 205-06.
[14]*Esprit*, XV, 5, vol. 1, 330.
[15]Ibid., XV, 4, vol. 1, 329.
[16]Ibid., XV, 13, vol. 1, 338.
[17]*Of the Inequality that is Among Us*, I, 42, *(O)* 251, (*E*, vol. 1) 255.
[18]*Of Vanity*, III, 9, *(O)* 935, (*E*, vol. 2) 423.
[19]*Of Presumption*, II, 17, *(O)* 639, (*E*, vol. 2) 107.
[20]Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Representative Men," in *English Traits* etc., (London: J. M. Dent, 1908), pp. 237, 242.
[21]*Esprit*, XXVII, c. 1, vol. 2, 170.
[22]*Of Husbanding ones Will*, III, 10, *(O)* 989, (*E*, vol. 2) 482.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

CARL E. SCHORSKE

Mahler and Klimt: Social Experience and Artistic Evolution

ALL WHO HAVE GRAPPLED with the almost mythic life of Gustav Mahler will have encountered the climactic episode of his departure from Vienna after his resignation from the Hofoper. On December 9, 1907, at the Westbahnhof, a throng of admirers, secretly mobilized to avoid publicity, gathered on the platform to bid farewell to the revered director. As the train pulled away in the grey of the morning, the crowd stood for a few minutes in glum silence, spellbound. Then the painter Gustav Klimt, usually the most wordless of men, found voice for all. He found it in a single word: "*Vorbei.*"

What was "*Vorbei*"? At the most obvious level, of course, it was the decade of Mahler's reign at the Opera, which had revitalized that art of the court in a spirit of rigorous bourgeois discipline and absolute dedication to art itself. But for Klimt, who had no more affinity for music than Mahler had for painting, the conductor's departure carried other, wider resonances. By 1907 Klimt had himself sustained terrible reverses as a public artist. First raised up by imperial and municipal officialdom as stellar representative of Austria's modernity in art, he had soon been abandoned by his political patrons under the relentless pressure of his critics on the old Liberal Left and the new Christian Right. He had withdrawn to a narrow circle of private patrons and admirers. Not for four years had he displayed his work in Vienna.

Like Mahler, though from a different point of departure, Klimt had participated in the great effort to revitalize the arts of Austria, and through the arts, to regenerate Austrian culture as a whole. The careers of the two artists often ran parallel, occasionally crossed, and frequently responded in similar ways to the same crisis of liberal culture and society. By 1907 the efforts of both men to revitalize Austrian culture seemed to be blocked.

I

Born only two years apart, Klimt and Mahler received their education in the confident culture of ascendant liberalism in the late 1870s. As the bourgeoisie appropriated to itself the traditional arts of Austria in building its new world of *Recht* and *Kultur*, the theatrical and representative arts occupied a central place. Where the best painters of Paris or even Berlin had long abandoned decorative painting in favor of self-determined canvases for the anonymous market, Klimt, like Makart before him, was drawn to architectural painting as still the most

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

prestigious branch of his art in Austria.[1] During the 1880s, while Mahler launched his conducting career in provincial opera houses, Klimt also worked in theaters, painting ceilings and murals in the theaters of Fiume and Karlsbad. His crowning commission was to decorate a great stairway in the new Burgtheater on Vienna's Ringstrasse, with a series of ceiling paintings of drama, from the festival of Dionysus to modern times. The program of these panels shows how closely the liberal fathers had integrated the theatrical and historical outlooks. Each mural celebrated the unity of theater and society, while the series as a whole represented the triumphant absorption of the theaters of the past into the rich eclecticism of Ringstrasse culture. Thus a picture of Shakespeare's theater represented not merely the players on stage, but also the audience of the age that found its mirror in theater. Moreover, Klimt recorded in the painting his own sense of identification with the culture he served as artist. He pictured himself, in the company of his partner and his brother, as a member of the Elizabethan audience. Like earlier painters who had presented themselves as witnesses in the Christian dramas of religion, Klimt historicized himself as communicant in the Viennese religion of drama. In 1887 the City Council commissioned Klimt and his partner, Franz Matsch, to paint the Old Burgtheater before it gave way to the new house. Not just the stage, but the patrons too were immortalized on canvas. Klimt made it a group portrait of Vienna's *zweite Gesellschaft*, where aristocrats and educated burgers mingled, including the emperor's actress-friend, Katherina Schratt, Dr. Theodor Billroth, and the future mayor, Karl Lueger. The work won Klimt the Emperor's Prize in 1890, and secured his reputation as Vienna's outstanding young painter.

The style and iconic idiom in which Klimt worked in this formative decade reflected well the values of the secure Ringstrasse high culture. In his *Athena*, executed for the great vestibule of the Kunsthistorisches Museum in 1891, the positivistic historical spirit celebrates an almost photographic triumph (Plate I). The goddess is molded in a solid, smoothly realistic way. Holding her heavy Nike and her spear, she poses like a young Viennese matron trying out a costume for a ball. With learned precision, Klimt provided as background a wall in the ornamental idiom of classical Greece. With the same historical fidelity, he painted female representatives of other great cultural epochs for the museum spandrels—Egyptian, Renaissance, and so on.

While Klimt thus totally identified himself with Ringstrasse culture, Mahler took a somewhat different path, associating himself with the strong populist and national orientation that gripped bourgeois youth after the Franco-Prussian War. Paradoxically, Mahler's greater populist sentiment was related to the fact that he was, by intellectual formation and education, if not by social origin, a member of a higher class than Klimt. The son of a gold engraver, Klimt was, with his two brothers, destined by his father to the artisanate. Accordingly, he attended only the School of Arts and Crafts, and had no formal schooling in the culture of the elite. As an artisanal artist, Klimt was executor of the decorative programs defined by his patrons, whose culture he accepted uncritically as that of his social betters until the 1890s. Although Mahler's father began as a Jewish pushcart peddler, he and his wife prized German high culture. To cultivate their son's musical gifts, they sent him to the Conservatory in Vienna at the age

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of fifteen, but they made sure that he completed the humanistic Gymnasium and attended the University as well.

Although the Conservatory was a stronghold of classical musical orthodoxy, Mahler, with many of his fellow-students, fell totally under the spell of Richard Wagner. For a young man as saturated with the reading of philosophy and literature as Mahler, more was implied by Wagner than musical radicalism alone. During Mahler's university years (1878-81), Wagner was the hero of nationalist populist student movements with strong antiliberal and social overtones. Mahler strengthened this ideology with his own kind of folkish romanticism, worshipping the people as expressive of the genuine and the natural in man. It is thus that he came to the folk poetry anthologized in the *Knaben Wunderhorn* as the principal source of literary inspiration for his first two decades of life as a composer (through the first four symphonies). That the collectors of the folk poetry of the *Knaben Wunderhorn* in the Napoleonic era, Arnim and Brentano, were young aristocratic *révoltés* against the Frenchified elite culture of their own time, makes Mahler's recovery of their romantic populism in the crisis of late liberal culture easily comprehensible.

The relationship between social origin and ideological commitment were thus paradoxically inverse in Klimt and Mahler in their early years. Klimt, the artist from the artisan class, drew his subjects and inconography almost exclusively from the historical and classical culture of the bourgeois elite. Mahler, a child of bourgeois *Bildung*, glorified the truths of the folk. In the *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen*, which issued from a personal experience of unrequited love, Mahler extended his romantic individualism by identifying with an artisan social type. "The songs are conceived together," he wrote, "as if a travelling journeyman who has experienced a [blow of] fate goes out into the world and now wanders aimlessly."[2] Klimt expressed no such affinity for the lot of the man of the people. Only the commitment of their respective arts to theater, and their devotion to an ideal of theater as public mirror of man, provided a common platform for Mahler and Klimt, these two quite different children of the Ringstrasse era.

II

In the mid-nineties, Klimt began to change in a direction that brought him closer to Mahler's world of ideas. He became, in fact, the leader of *die Jungen* in the plastic arts. A generational revolt against the liberal fathers, the movement loosely called *die Jungen* had appeared first in politics among university youth in the 1870s, with demands for national and social reforms. To this wave belonged not only Mahler and his philosopher-friend Siegfried Lipiner, but Theodor Herzl and Sigmund Freud, Heinrich Friedjung and Victor Adler. Then about 1890, the movement spread to literature, where the revolt against bourgeois morality took the less political form of explorations of sexuality, its glories and its pain. In 1897 the plastic artists in turn broke away from their elders in the *Künstlerhaus* and founded the Secession. Klimt served as its first president and *spiritus rector*, but its ideologists were two veterans from the political and literary *Jungen*, Hermann Bahr and Max Burckhard. Both men had been Wagnerians and Nietzscheans, both were connected with the theater—Bahr as playwright

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

and critic, Burckhard as director of the Burgtheater since 1890. In the Secession's periodical, *Ver Sacrum* (the very title proclaiming the movement's regenerative intent), the two spokesmen declared war on the desiccated culture of the fathers. It was in its pages that Adolf Loos first attacked Ringstrasse Vienna as a Potemkin City.

In the first issue of *Ver Sacrum*, Klimt displayed a veritable sunburst of stylistic experiments: colophons, two-dimensional drawings, pencil sketches, type design, cartoons. Both dissolution and new growth were proclaimed here. Klimt's freely inventive handling of his rich repertoire of visual materials reminds one of the ironic motivic transformations and formal experimentation of Mahler's First Symphony, though Klimt did not yet attempt a comparably structured form. Like Mahler when he used *Frère Jacques* as a dirge, Klimt broke up the fixed references of familiar images and the coherence of traditional associations, assigning to old iconic symbols new meanings, in a kind of metamorphic mode in which logical contradiction appeared as organic truth. The critical idea that things are not what they seem he conveyed not only by fracturing the systems of signs, but also by rapid shifts in style, akin to Mahler's abandonment of a single orchestral texture in favor of ever-transforming instrumental groupings. Populism, be it noted, played no role in Klimt; hence he did not, like Mahler, employ folk iconography to convey his own values. His critique of the regnant culture was exclusively aesthetic and psychological. Even to proclaim his break from it he used its own classical iconography.

For the first Secession show, Klimt provided a poster proclaiming the generational revolt. He chose as his vehicle the myth of Theseus, who slew the brutal Minotaur to liberate the youth of Athens (Plate II). We should observe that Klimt presented the theme not directly, but—as befitting his commitment to Austria's powerful tradition of theatre—in the form of a dramatic scene on the stage, as though it were Act I in the Secessionist drama. Athena, wise virgin protectrix of the polis, had been chosen by the Austrian Liberals to stand before the new Parliament as a symbol of a rational polity. Klimt appropriated her now to sponsor the liberation of the arts by the young. From politics to culture as the scene of action: that is how the journey ran.

Klimt's technique of representation changed with his ideational commitment. In his first Athena, in the Museum spandrel, the goddess had body, substantiality. Now, in the poster, she is two-dimensional—Klimt's newfound way of stating an abstraction. She sponsors a dramatic idea; since it is not yet realized, he treats it as disembodied, allegorical, on the stage.

A major painting of Athena in 1898 shows Klimt's growth in the subversive exploitation of the metamorphic mode (Plate III). To understand it, one must include another female figure whom Klimt had devised as a symbol of his commitment to a truth for "modern" man: *Nuda veritas*. She began in a two-dimensional drawing for *Ver Sacrum*. Then, for Hermann Bahr, Klimt produced a molded, fleshly version of her, emblematic of his artistic explorations of erotic life. In the final painting of *Athena*, the destiny of *Nuda veritas* converged with that of the goddess. Athena herself, far from the simple solidity of her persona in the Kunsthistorisches Museum, or from the two-dimensional abstraction of the Theseus poster, is now vaguely molded, impassive but with enigmatic force. But more has changed than the character of Athena: the traditional Nike,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

winged victory, is no longer in Athena's hand. In her place stands *Nuda veritas*, holding her mirror to modern man. But *Nuda veritas* too has changed. Once a two-dimensional waif, she is now the sexy woman of the Bahr version, with hair of flaming red. Here we have a crucial turning point in the emergence of a new culture from an old. Klimt distorted the ancient iconography in a truly subversive way: Athena, virgin goddess, recent symbol of Austria's constitutional polis and of ordering wisdom, now holds on her orb the sexy bearer of the mirror of modern man. Klimt thus embarked both on the transformation of inherited symbols and the desublimation of art.

In the same year, 1898, Klimt also entered into the world of ideas in which Mahler already moved. For the music room of Nicolaus Dumba, Klimt painted a pair of panels representing the function of music in two sharply contrasting ways: one, *Schubert at the Piano*, is historical and social; the other *Music*, showing a Greek priestess with a kithara, is mythic and psychological. In these panels Biedermeier cheerfulness and Dionysian inquietude confront each other across the room. The Schubert panel (Plate IV) represents *Hausmusik*, music as the aesthetic crown of a social existence both ordered and secure. The scene is bathed in warm candlelight, which softens the outlines of the figures to blend them into social harmony. In time and formal composition, it is a historical genre-painting, quite in the line of Klimt's Burgtheater ceiling paintings. But now the clear substantiality of those earlier works, with their positivistic commitment to re-create realistically *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, has been sedulously expunged. Adapting impressionistic techniques to his service, Klimt substitutes for historical reconstruction, nostalgic evocation. He paints us a lovely dream, glowing but insubstantial, of an innocent, comforting *Hauskunst*, an art that served a comfortable society. One is reminded of Schubert's own song, *An die Musik*, in which the poet offered thanks to his *holde Kunst* for "transporting him into a better world." Like many other of his bourgeois contemporaries, Klimt recalled the once-hated age of Metternich as the gracious-simple age of Schubert—a Biedermeier Paradise Lost. It is the same world that Mahler recaptured in the more deliberately folkish, less elitist utopia of the cheery, angelic chorus in the final movement of the Fourth Symphony; or in the light dances of both the Third and Fourth symphonies; and in the very Biedermeier terms that he uses in the score to instruct the interpreters, such as "*behaglich*," "*gemächlich*" (cozily, comfortably).

How different in both idea and execution is Klimt's other music panel (Plate V). In contrast with the dissolved space of impressionism in *Schubert*, Klimt fills this canvas with archaic symbols realistically presented, symbols as they would survive as archeological remains. The conception of art and the symbols to convey it bespeak Klimt's debt to two figures who play an important part in the whole *fin-de-siècle* crisis of rationalism, and who brought Klimt into Mahler's philosophical world: Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Music appears in Klimt's painting as a tragic muse, a singer, with the power of transforming buried instincts and mysterious cosmic power into harmony. The symbols accompanying her are those that Nietzsche used in *The Birth of Tragedy:* the songstress's instrument is Apollo's—a kithara; but the materials of her song would seem to be Dionysus's. On the hard stone tomb behind her are two figures: one is Silenus, the companion of Dionysus whom Nietzsche called "a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

symbol of the sexual omnipotence of nature" and "companion of the sufferings of the god." The other figure is the Sphinx, child-eating mother, embodiment of the metamorphic continuum of animal and man, of terror and female beauty. Silenus and Sphinx thus seem to represent the buried instinctual forces that the Apollonian necromancer will summon in song from the tomb of time. Thus, over against the gently glowing lost historical paradise of Schubert stand the archetypal symbols of instinctual energies, to which art has mysterious access through the heavy stone lid of civilization's coffer. For Klimt, as for Mahler in the Third Symphony, the great god Pan appears paired with Biedermeier simplicity and composure in a strange dialectic of daemonic vitalism and historical-utopian naiveté.

III

While Mahler has come to be understood as a philosophic musician, Klimt is still generally regarded as the painter of the sensuous life. Klimt's more comprehending contemporaries, however, held a wider view. "Gustav Klimt," wrote the poet Peter Altenberg, "you are at once a painter of vision and a modern philosopher, an altogether modern poet." A commission for ceiling paintings for the ceremonial hall of the newly completed University of Vienna gave Klimt an occasion to present fully the philosophic vision adumbrated in the Dumba music room.

The authorities of the faculty and the Ministry of Culture set a central theme for the ceiling paintings in the spirit of traditional Enlightenment: the triumph of Light over Darkness. Klimt was to produce allegorical representations of three of the four faculties: Philosophy, Medicine, and Jurisprudence.[3] In *Philosophy*, Klimt shows himself to be still a child of a theatrical culture (Plate VI). He presents the world to us as if we were viewing it from the pit, as a *theatrum mundi* in the Baroque tradition. But where the Baroque *theatrum mundi* was clearly stratified into heaven, earth, and hell, now earth itself seems gone, dissolved into a fusion of the other two spheres. The tangled bodies of suffering mankind drift slowly by, suspended aimless in a viscous void. Out of the cosmic murk—the stars are far behind—a heavy, sleepy sphinx looms all unseeing, herself but a condensation of atomized space. Only the face at the base of the picture suggests in its luminosity the existence of a conscious mind. *Das Wissen*, as the catalogue calls this figure, is placed in the rays of the footlights, like a prompter turned around, as though to cue us, the audience, into the cosmic drama.

Klimt's vision of the universe here is Schopenhauer's—the World as Will, as blind energy in an endless round of meaningless parturiency, love, and death. In his Third Symphony, Mahler developed in 1895-96 a similar vision of the universe as conceived by Schopenhauerian vitalism. But Mahler retained a cosmos organized still as a Baroque hierarchy of being, while Klimt's cosmos was amorphous. Where painter and musician converge is in the crucial figure of the *interpreter* of the cosmos. For Klimt, it is *das Wissen;* for Mahler, it is the soloist in the fourth movement of the Third Symphony, who sings Zarathustra's dark, rhapsodic "Drunken Song of Midnight."[4] Indeed, Mahler's magnificent setting of Nietzsche's song can afford the viewer of Klimt's *Philosophy*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

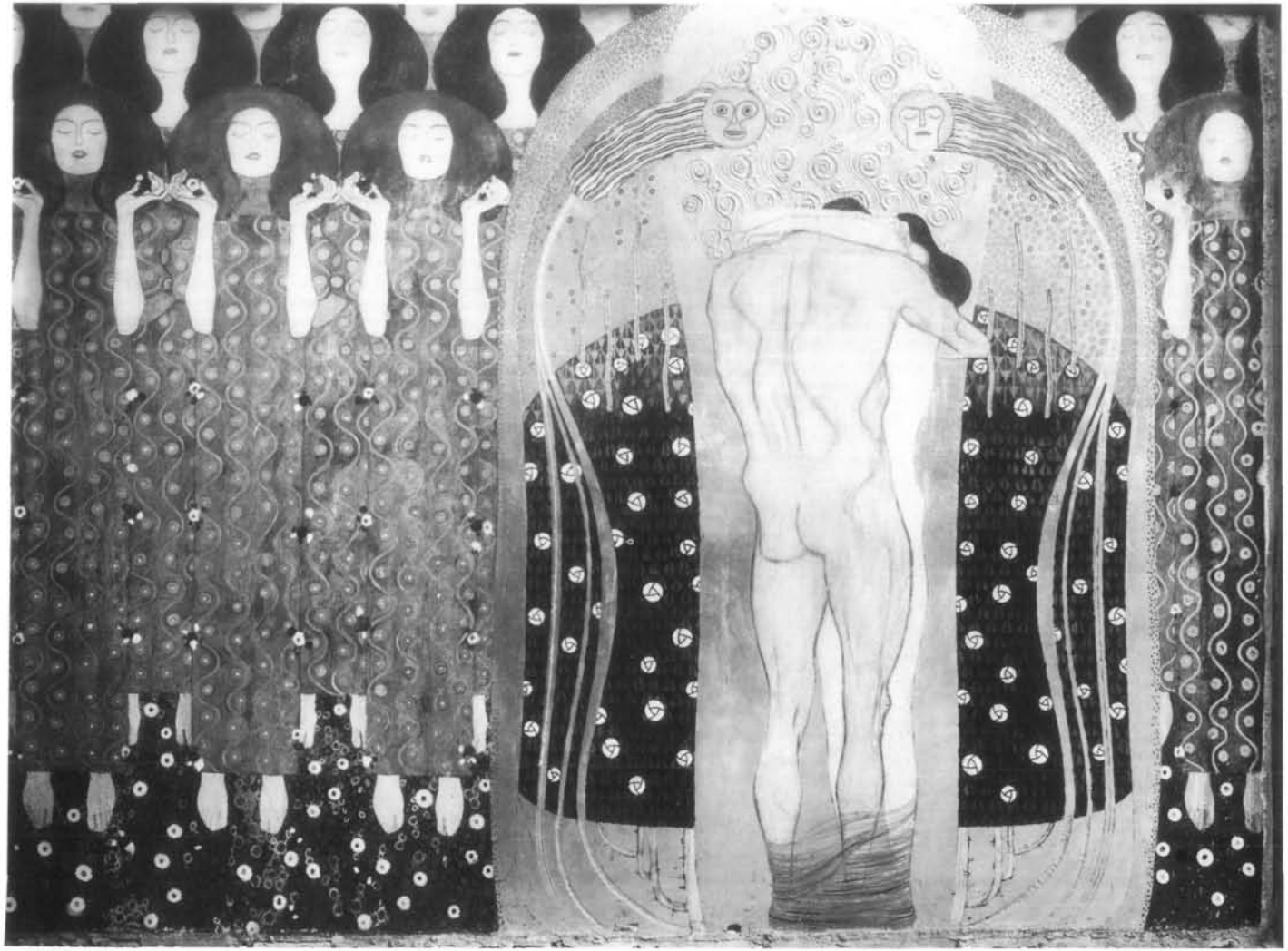


Plate VIII. Beethoven frieze, detail of Panel III, 1902.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Plate VII. Jurisprudence, 1903-7.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Plate VI. Philosophy, 1900.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Plate V. Music, 1898.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Plate IV. Schubert at the Piano, 1899.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Plate III. Pallas Athena, 1898.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

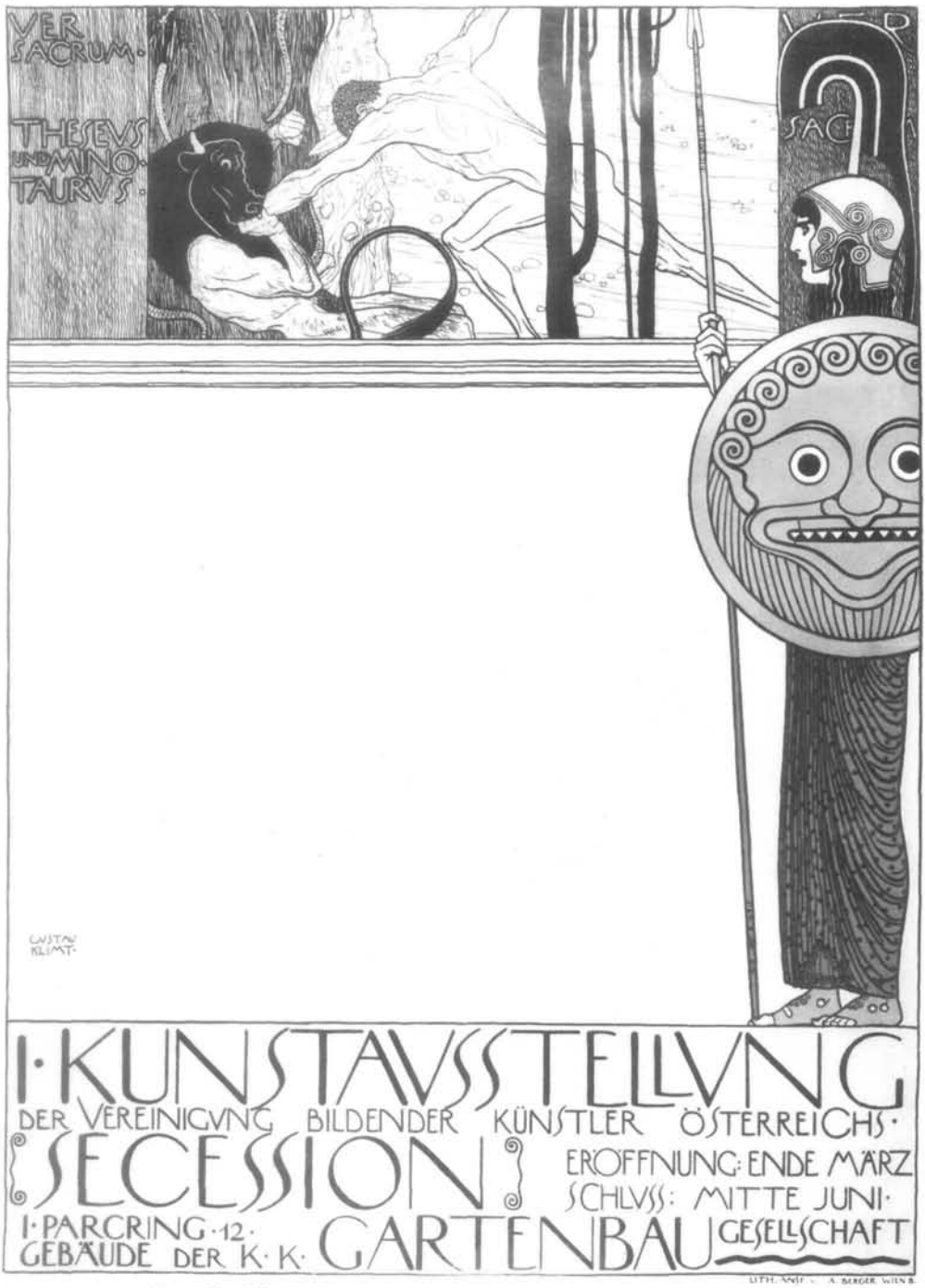


Plate II. Theseus, poster for the First Secession Exhibition, 1897.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

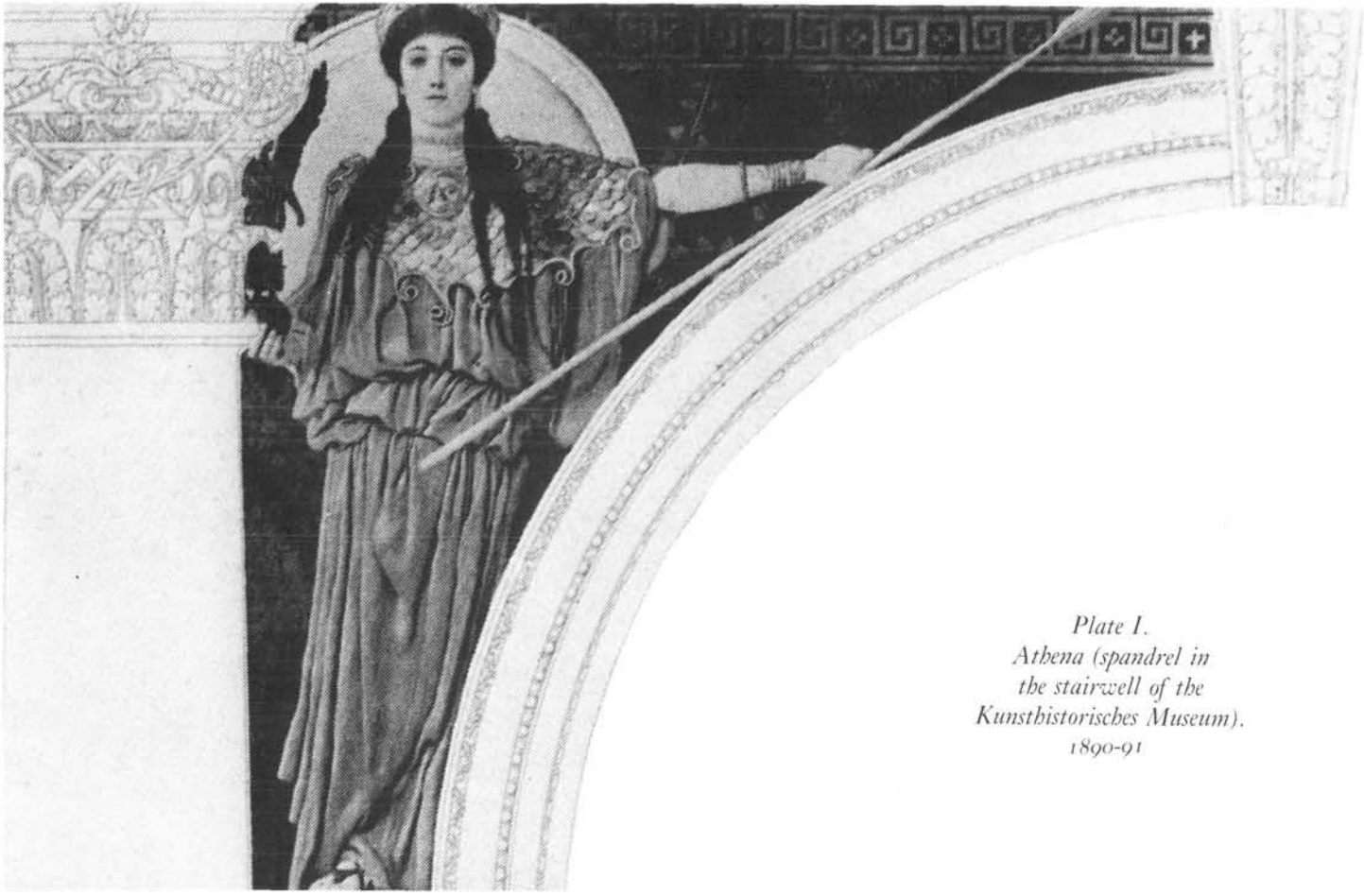


Plate 1.
Athena (spandrel in the stairwell of the Kunsthistorisches Museum).
1890-91

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

another kind of access to that intellectual generation's painfully psychologized world view—a view that at once affirms desire *(Lust)* and suffers the deathly dissolution of the boundaries between ego and world that desire decrees. It is a cosmic vision utterly subversive of the liberal-rationalist world view:

Oh man, Take care!	O Mensch! Gib acht:
What does the deep midnight declare?	Was spricht die tiefe Mitternacht?
I was asleep—	Ich schlief, ich schlief—
From a deep dream I woke and know:	Aus tiefem Traum bin ich erwacht;—
The world is deep,	Die Welt ist tief,
Deeper than the day had known.	Und tiefer als der Tag gedacht.
Deep is its woe—	Tief ist ihr Weh—
Desire—deeper still than agony:	Lust—tiefer noch als Herzeleid;
Woe speaks: Go, die!	Weh spricht: Vergeh!
But desire wants eternity—	Doch alle Lust will Ewigkeit—
Wants deep, deep eternity!	will tiefe, tiefe Ewigkeit!

Nietzsche's explication of his "Midnight Song" in the glowing finale of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* reads as though written to elucidate Klimt's painting. Nietzsche calls the midnight singer "this drunken poetess," who has become, as the luminous upturned eyes suggest, "overwakeful" *(überwach)*. Like Nietzsche's poetess, Klimt's *Wissen* ingests into dream the pain—and more, desire itself *(Lust)*—to affirm life in its mysterious totality: "Do you say 'yes' to a single desire? Oh, my friends, then you say 'yes' to all pain." As in Klimt's floating chain of humankind, "all things . . . are interlinked, entwined, enamoured. . . . Thus you shall love the world."

It was not thus that the faculty of the University of Vienna knew or loved the world. With his sombre Nietzschean vision, Klimt touched a nerve end in the academic body. A group of faculty, led by the Positivist ethical philosopher Friedrich Jodl, launched a campaign for the rejection of Klimt's work. In the following year, 1901, Klimt ran into opposition in another quarter, when he offered his second University painting, *Medicine*, executed in a similar spirit. Now it was the New Right, the Christian anti-Semites, who led the campaign, bringing the issue into Parliament.

I cannot here trace the vicissitudes of the so-called *Deckengemälde* (ceiling painting) crisis. Yet its framework is important in understanding the social factors that affected Klimt and the character of his art. Until that crisis, state commissions had provided for Klimt what opera had afforded Mahler: a solid foundation for his livelihood and a major vehicle for his artistic ideas. The Austrian state from 1897 on had shown particular understanding for the new art of the Secession, extending patronage to its artists through commissions and teaching assignments. This official sympathy for modernism in art was related to political crisis. When nationality conflict completely paralyzed Austria's constitution, the so-called Bureaucratic Ministry that had replaced parliamentary government (1900-1904) sought to outflank political tensions by a two-pronged campaign of modernization. Culture was one wing, economic development the other, in Minister-President Koerber's program. Hence, where most European states rejected modernity in art in their cultural policy, the Austrian state deliberately espoused it as a transcendent cosmopolitan counterweight to national divisions.[5]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Soon, however, public attacks on modern art converted the government's cultural asset into a political liability. The University paintings were a hinge in this change, and Klimt was its victim, as the government began to temper its strategy to the opposition. Thus the Minister of Culture, who had firmly defended Klimt and his *Philosophy* against the protesting professors in 1900, began to weaken when the New Right carried the attack on *Medicine* into Parliament.

Klimt's reaction was both angry and wounded. His two responses—fight and flight—found expression in two major works of art: his wrath, in *Jurisprudence;* his withdrawal, in the so-called Beethoven frieze. Together they marked the end of Klimt's public and philosophic phase and his development of a new abstract ornamental aesthetic for the private world of the cultivated elite, to which he henceforth confined himself.

In his third University painting, *Jurisprudence* (Plate VII), Klimt unleashed his full rage at his detractors. For the culture of liberalism, nothing was more sacred than the rule of law. In Klimt's preliminary sketch for *Jurisprudence*, in 1898, he had reflected this unequivocal affirmation of the law through an idealized figure of Justice about to slay the evil monster of crime with her sword. In the final version, reconceived in 1901 under the impact of the attacks on *Philosophy* and *Medicine*, Klimt shifts our sympathy from Justice to its victim. The culprit-victim is consigned to the submarine void where the hollow-eyed furies of the law execute their hapless human prey. Far above him are the judges, small of head. The symbolic figures of Justice, Truth, and Law are purely decorative—remote from, and indifferent to, the suffering with which they are associated. Finally, in this grim spectacle, the punishment is sexual, the consumption of the male victim by a womb-shaped polyp in a watery world swirling with tentacular female hair. Klimt thus expressed not only his rage at public authority in this vision of Jurisprudence, but also his own impotence, as victim, in the face of it.

The psychological contrast-piece to this great work is the frieze that Klimt executed in 1902 for the Secession's Beethoven show, to which Mahler also contributed. Rarely have artists engaged in such a collective act of narcissism as did the Secessionists in this exhibition, where they celebrated an artist, the sculptor Klinger, celebrating another artist, the composer Beethoven, as an Olympian commanding a great eagle with the power of art. Klimt's frieze used the last movement of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony to present man's quest for happiness. A victory over "the hostile forces" is achieved by the souls' flying over them, arriving finally at a utopian heaven of art (Plate VIII). There, "the longing for happiness finds its surcease in poesy."[6] In contrast to the molded realism of the lower figures in *Jurisprudence*, these are two-dimensional once more, as in the early Secession drawings of Theseus and *Nuda veritas;* that is, they belong to the realm of ideality, not reality, for Klimt. The panel culminates in Schiller's words in the *Ode to Joy: Dieser Kuss der ganzen Welt*. But Klimt has stripped the kiss of the revolutionary import with which Schiller and Beethoven invested it as symbol of the brotherhood of man. He presents instead erotic fulfillment—a kiss of lovers in a womb-shaped bower. Ideality is no longer, as for Schiller and Beethoven, social, but personal and psychological.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Art's sublimating power proclaims a narcissistic fantasy of potency, a sexual consummation, to offset the dread defeat recorded in *Jurisprudence*.

After the crisis years, Klimt suspended his psychological exploration and allowed himself to be swept into the applied-arts current that carried the Secession movement in its second phase. For four years Klimt exhibited no paintings. When he displayed his works again in *Kunstschau 1908*, he showed how far the symbolic formalism of the Beethoven frieze had become his basic idiom. Adapting Byzantine elementalism, two-dimensionality, and the gemlike, crystalline forms of art deco to portraiture, he painted his wealthy subjects virtually encased in opulent, stylized settings, from which organic forms were almost hermetically excluded. His fantasized interiors created an ideal sybaritic environment in which only the most abstract symbolism remained to allude to the netherworld of instinct that he had once rendered in candid sensuosity. The painter of psychological exploration and metaphysical malaise thus became the painter of the upper-class life beautiful, removed and insulated from the common lot in a jeweled and geometrized milieu.

IV

For Mahler no less than for Klimt, the years 1900 and 1901 were years of personal trial, traumatic encounter with society, and consequent artistic reorientation. The differences between the two artists became clearer through their responses, both psychological and aesthetic, to somewhat similar experiences of rejection and hostility that led both men to withdraw from the public realm.

Unlike Klimt, Mahler occupied a high official post, director of the Court Opera, perhaps the most exposed position in the Austrian art world. Yet Mahler enjoyed, as Klimt did not, almost unwavering support from his political superiors for almost a decade. Mahler's external problem lay, until the end of his directorship in 1907, not with his bureaucratic superiors, but with his musicians, the critics, and the public.

Scholars have long identified the summer of 1901 as a hinge in Mahler's development as a composer. That year he came to his new summer house on the Wörthersee seriously exhausted. Yet during July and August he produced an astonishing series of compositions: his last *Wunderhorn* song, seven Rückert songs (including three of the *Kindertotenlieder*), and the scherzo movement of the Fifth Symphony. The span of contrasts contained in these works is truly breathtaking: folk song versus self-conscious, romantic poetry; social concerns versus depth-psychological impulses; verbal ideas as musical material versus "pure" music unassisted by program; monumental symphony versus confessional song. In these polarities lay the heterogeneous elements of Mahler's past and present that he was in the process of sorting and reordering in his art as the new century began.

Behind the reshuffling of Mahler's ideas as composer lay a crisis in his career as conductor. In the Opera, to be sure, he had achieved a solid position by 1900, successfully introducing the changes in the company necessary to realize his exacting standards of ensemble performance. Public and critics gave Mahler

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recognition sufficient to fortify his ego against the negative judgments that inevitably attend the work of an opera director. It was rather as conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic that Mahler elicited a degree of hostile criticism that wounded him to the depths of his being. In this role, Mahler's ideas and interests as composer converged with his conceptions as interpreter—especially of his culture-hero Beethoven. As in his compositions, so in his interpretations, he strove for purity and luminosity in every detail, but he often achieved this, in the view of listeners accustomed to a different performing practice, at the expense of the main lines of a work. What to Mahler was clear etching of the individual elements that constituted a composition seemed to his listeners more like fragmentation of the whole. An otherwise friendly French critic complained in 1900: "A purpose is discovered in every note; everything is made explicit; the structure is invested with so much complexity that the basic design is destroyed."[7] Moreover, in his interpretations of others' works, as in his own composing, Mahler drastically widened the emotional range of music, increasing the demands on audience and musicians alike. He transformed performing traditions with experimentation, rescoring, and new instrumental balance. Mahler insisted that he was the representative of the composer, but his restless search for the composer's truth made it impossible for the orchestra to pin him down even to his own achieved interpretation.

As Klimt encountered his first significant opposition when he shocked the academy by recasting the deeply established image of Philosophy, so Mahler elicited serious antagonism when he challenged the accepted reading of that most defined of all musical heroes, Beethoven. What the protesting professors of the University were to Klimt, resistant orchestral musicians of the Philharmonic were to Mahler: professional defenders of nineteenth century modes of thought and feeling in their cultural domains. Mahler, however, was more directly dependent on his opponents than Klimt. As members of the Opera orchestra, the musicians were under his command, since he had been appointed director by the Court. But as members of the Philharmonic, a free association, they had elected Mahler their conductor, and thus held collective authority over him. The bolder among them let Mahler feel the sting of their disapprobation increasingly from his first Beethoven concert of 1898 on.

Beethoven's music was the most constant center of controversy between Mahler and his critics, precisely because Beethoven was a hero to both parties. Mahler justified his alterations in instrumentation as necessary to restore to Beethoven's works the purity of line and textural balance that had been destroyed by the changes in instruments since the composer's day, and to overcome the blurring acoustical qualities of large modern halls. The attack on his "overpainting" of Beethoven's scores reached its climax over a performance of the Ninth Symphony in February 1900. Mahler produced a pamphlet defending his procedures as devoted to one "sole aim"—"to pursue Beethoven's will down to its minutest manifestations."[8]

To disaffection in the orchestra and the attacks of musically conservative critics, the anti-Semites also joined their voices, just as they had in the case of Klimt. Mahler's response was determined and defiant. In his second Philharmonic program of the Winter season of 1900, he included his own First Symphony. Mahler's very right to do so was challenged by one of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

orchestra's members of the Philharmonic committee. Mahler had originally called his First Symphony the *Titan*; it celebrated the struggle, suffering, and defeat of the heroic individual. Now he boldly placed it on the Philharmonic program between two classic works dealing with roughly the same theme: Beethoven's *Creatures of Prometheus* and Schumann's *Manfred* overture. Prometheus too was a Titan, creator of man and culture-former; Byron's Manfred was a Faustian figure who heroically defied the spirit world. If Mahler had willed suffering and rejection, he could not have devised a stronger means to bring it upon himself than this self-identification with these sovereign composers. It was the same kind of defiance that Klimt had offered his University enemies in *Jurisprudence*.

In the wake of the tumultuous reception of his First Symphony by critics and public, Mahler seems to have lost his sense of proportion. In a bitter speech to his musicians, he charged them not only with hostility, but with faithlessness. "I did not act like a man offended and wounded in his pride, but a general abandoned by his troops," he said in unconvincing self-extenuation.[9] A grave illness soon compounded the traumatic impact of the Philharmonic experience. On April 1, 1901, Mahler resigned his conductorship in frustration and defeat.

V

Against the background of his intense crisis of rejection as conductor and composer, Mahler generated during his summer retreat of 1901 the creative response that changed the ideational premises of his music and gave a new turn to his artistic life. It is perhaps not too much to say that he killed off, in the compositions he then produced, what had given him his hope in humankind thus far: his faith in the folk and the child. Surely he reconsidered both under the sign of withdrawal and death.[10] He wrote the last of his *Wunderhorn* songs, "The Drummer Boy"—the blackest of them all. The drummer boy of the poem has failed in his functions, and is going to the death that society has decreed. Like a child going to bed, he says "Good night" to all his comrades and to the lovely outer world. Nothing Titanic clings to this stark song of execution of an ordinary youth. The *Knaben Wunderhorn*, from which Mahler had drawn much earthy philosophic sustenance for his first four symphonies in the form of concrete folk experience, was also going to its death with the drummer boy. Mahler turned from folk poetry to art poetry—to Friedrich Rückert, a romantic who spoke in the cultivated accent of personal introspection and alienation from the world that suited Mahler's state of mind. Nor did Mahler's Titan survive the change of spirit. In the Rückert songs, the Titan is replaced by a chronic sufferer, burdened by the heavy pain of life and death. The last of them, "Lost to the World" *(Ich bin der Welt abhanden gekommen)* poignantly, yet coolly, expresses the state of the introverted one: he has died to the struggles of the world where he had so long spent his substance, and lives now, resigned and apart, in his heaven, his love, and his song.

The combination of Dionysian affirmation and Biedermeier cheerfulness that Mahler shared with Klimt in the 1890s, and had expressed in his Third and Fourth symphonies, also gave way to the darker vision of 1901. On the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dionysian side, in the "Midnight Song" of Nietzsche's Zarathustra at the heart of the Third Symphony, Mahler had affirmed desire and the will to life, even in the highest awareness of pain and death. In *Um Mitternacht*, a new midnight song in the Rückert series of 1901, the artist, suddenly becoming conscious of his own mortality, draws back from life.

Mahler's identification of hope for mankind with the image of the child and the folk had reached its brightest, most buoyant expression in the Biedermeier child-utopia with which he crowned the Fourth Symphony. In the *Kindertotenlieder*, he dealt a stunning blow to the idea of the child as light of the world, placing it too under the shadow of death. Folk faith and child hope together lost their place in Mahler's art. Not only in his choice of texts, in his shift away from folk verse to literary poetry, did he seem to bid farewell to his populist cultural commitment, but in his music, too. In the scherzo of his Fifth, also written in the summer of 1901, Mahler virtually destroys folk dance along with popular bourgeois waltz music by using them as symbols of fragile, false pleasure, through which break powerful forces of chaos and existential *Angst*. The eccentric reality to which he assigns the dances is Nietzschean, fragmented, but the composer confronts it with neither his former Titanic resistance nor his Zarathustrian affirmation.[11] Mahler prophesied, almost contemptuously, that this scherzo movement would long be inaccessible to both musicians and audience. Conductors would "make nonsense of it," and as for the public—"O heavens!—what kind of a face will they make of this chaos that is forever giving birth to a new world, which in the next moment collapses, to these primordial-world-sounds, to this roaring, howling, tossing sea, to these dancing stars."[12]

In a worldly reality thus increasingly conceived as painfully nonhomogeneous, Mahler sought his solace no longer in folk-utopias, but in transcendent, metaphysical peace. This too found powerful expression in the Fifth Symphony, in its mystical adagietto movement, woven around the theme of the Rückert song, "Lost to the World." As Mahler's social experience deepened his pessimism, his psychological introversion and religious impulse fed upon each other, generating powerful new musical ideas.

VI

In 1902 Mahler joined Klimt and the Secession artists in their celebration of Klinger's Beethoven. Like Klimt, Mahler centered his contribution on Beethoven's Ninth Symphony and Schiller's *Ode to Joy*. Like Klimt, he ignored the Titanic Promethean emphasis that marked Klinger's statue, despite his long engagement with that theme.

Klimt had given his interpretation of the Ninth an erotic turn, transmuting Schiller's kiss of universal brotherhood into a kiss of erotic fulfillment. Such was his utopia, such his refuge from the trials through which he had passed in the University crisis. It also contained—provocatively—one of the elements that most shocked Klimt's antagonists: sexual openness.

Mahler made his quite different contribution in a way similarly consistent with his own recent experience. He too ignored his critics' sensibilities where he most had nettled them: rearranging Beethoven. He reduced a portion of the Ninth's choral movement for a wind ensemble. But the portion he selected was not any more Schiller's clarion call to universal brotherhood that had so stirred

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the European liberal soul than was Klimt's. Instead, Mahler chose Schiller's reminder to the dejected millions of the Creator, who must be there in the firmament above:

> Ihr stürzt nieder, Millionen?
> Ahnest du den Schöpfer, Welt?
> Such ihn überm Sternenzelt!
> Über Sternen muß er wohnen.

Such a selection was entirely consistent with Mahler's recent shift from a terrestrial and populist scene of realization of human ideality to a transcendental one. Consistent too with Mahler's mood at the time was his silencing of the human voices to which Beethoven had given this awesome portion of Schiller's poem, to let the winds speak in wordless tone.

In the coming years, to the end of his directorship in 1907, while Klimt painted in seclusion for his small, elite circle, Mahler returned with new vigor to the wider public scene through his work at the Opera. His partner in transforming the visual side of his opera-theater was the designer Alfred Roller, a friend and close collaborator of Klimt in the Secession. In memorable new productions of *Tristan und Isolde*, *Fidelio*, and *Don Giovanni*, Roller and Mahler created a unified, simplified stagecraft. Together they succeeded in modernizing the most prestigious and traditional of Austria's theatrical arts. "All modern art," Mahler said in a press statement, "must serve the stage. I did say modern art, not Secession. What matters is the collaboration of all the arts. There is no future in the old standard cliches; art must extend to costumes, props, everything that can revitalize a work of art."[13] In that formula was contained not only the regeneration of the old, but also a legitimated realm of action for the new.

In the original works that expressed ideas and feelings unacceptable to those forces, old and new, that held cultural power in Austria, Mahler and Klimt sustained defeats that compelled each to rethink and recast the premises and purposes of his creative work. Both maintained a continuing fidelity to theatre, the sovereign art that each had served in his fledgling years. In his last years at the Opera, Mahler knew how to make of the ancient art the carrier of the new spirit, offering a living example of the regenerative virtue of modernity as well as the contemporary value of a traditional inheritance. Thus it was that he became the revered and idolized cultural figure to the avant-garde intelligentsia of Vienna. Thus it was that the nonverbal Klimt, who in his way had shared so much of Mahler's experience as artist, found the *mot juste* truly suited to the faithful gathered at the Westbahnhof when he said, "*Vorbei.*"

References

An earlier version of this paper appeared in the proceedings of the Gustav Mahler Colloquium, 1979, published by its sponsor, the Oesterreichische Gesellschaft für musik, in its *Beiträge, 1979-81.*

[1]A more detailed version of this analysis of Klimt's development will be found in my book *Fin-de-siècle Vienna* (New York: Knopf, 1980), chapter 5.

[2]Letter to Fritz Lohr, January 1, 1885. Gustav Mahler, *Briefe*, edited by Alma Maria Mahler (Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig: Paul Zsolnay, 1925) p. 34.

[3]His partner, Franz Matsch, was to execute Theology and the central panel representing the Triumph of Light over Darkness.

[4]*Also sprach Zarathustra*, part 3, chapter entitled "Das andere Tanzlied."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[5]Cf. Schorske, *Fin-de-siècle Vienna*, pp. 238-44.

[6]"Die Sehnsucht nach dem Glück findet ihre Stillung in der Poesie."

[7]Quoted in Kurt Blaukopf, *Gustav Mahler* (New York, Washington: 1973), p. 158.

[8]Cited in ibid., p. 155. Blaukopf discusses the essentials of Mahler's role as conductor of the Vienna Philharmonic, pp. 149-58. More detail is available in Henri-Louis La Grange, *Mahler* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973), chapters 28-31 *passim*.

[9]Quoted in La Grange, *Mahler*, p. 603.

[10]On the psychological and other dimensions of Mahler's work in the summer of 1901, see the penetrating and sensitive analysis of Stuart Feder, "Gustav Mahler um Mitternacht," *International Review of Psychoanalysis* 7 (1980); 11-26

[11]For a social analysis of Mahler's work that uses this scherzo as its pivotal center, see Vladimir Karbusicky, *Gustav Mahler und seine Umwelt* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1978).

[12]Quoted in ibid., p. 1.

[13]Blaukopf, p. 174

Plate 1 reproduced by courtesy of Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna.

Plates 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 8 reproduced by courtesy of Galerie Welz, Salzburg.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN CLIVE

The Versatile Signor di Bassetto: An Essay in Crime Prevention

THE CRIME I HOPE TO PREVENT is the neglect, by all except Shavians and musicologists, of three recently published volumes of Bernard Shaw's music criticism, including much that has hitherto been uncollected.[1] To my mind, these volumes contain some of the most pungent and amusing prose in the English language, and are well worth the time (and even the considerable outlay of money required for their purchase) of anyone who cares in the slightest about music, cultural history, or wit.

Shaw, it appears, was exposed to music almost from infancy. His father played the trombone; his mother had an excellent mezzo-soprano voice; one aunt played the 'cello, another the harp; and Bernard's boyhood ambition was to become an operatic baritone.

In 1876, at the age of twenty, Shaw began to write unsigned critical articles about music in London for *The Hornet*. He stopped after nine months, but resumed the role of music critic between 1888 and 1894, first for *The Star*, and then for *The World*. For a year and a quarter of that period, from February 1889 until May 1890, he adopted the pseudonym of Corno di Bassetto for his weekly column. "For my own part," he declared, in his first signed article,[2] "I am against anonymous criticism, and therefore sign my name and title in full without hesitation. The di Bassettos were known to Mozart, and were of service to him in the production of several of his works. The title was created in 1770." In fact, of course, the name was merely the Italian original for basset horn; an instrument, Shaw wrote many years later,[3] characterized by "a peculiar watery melancholy, as well as the total absence of any richness of passion in its tone." That was evidently why Mozart had employed it in the score of his *Requiem*. "If I had ever heard a note of it in 1888," Shaw continued, "I should not have selected it for a character which I intended to be sparkling. The devil himself could not make a basset horn sparkle."

But Shaw made his columns sparkle. Indeed, they were so different from the conventional music criticism of the time, "that all the journalists believed that the affair was a huge joke, the point of which was that I knew nothing whatever about music."[4] As a matter of fact, he knew a good deal about it. But he did not go in for the sort of musical "analysis" that he once mocked as "postludes brought to a close on the pedal of A, the cadence being retarded by four chords forming an *arpeggio* of a diminished seventh, each grade serving as

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

tonic for a perfect chord."[5] Nor did he care for the sort of "twaddle" that, in Shaw's own parody, chronicled a performance of Beethoven's "ever fresh and perennially welcome septet," executed by players who "have for so many decades charmed us with their unapproachable rendition of this delightful work, of which the composer in old age pretended to be ashamed."[6] He thus continued to give even some of his most admiring readers the impression that his writings on music were one huge joke, "the point of which lies in the fact that I am totally ignorant of music, and that my character of critic is an exquisitely ingenious piece of acting, undertaken to gratify my love of mystification and paradox."[7]

In later years, Shaw admitted to occasional vulgarity in his *Star* columns: "I purposely vulgarised musical criticism," he recalled in 1935, "which was then refined and academic to the point of being unreadable and often nonsensical."[8] *The Star*, after all, was then a ha'penny newspaper, not addressed to the Royal Society of Literature or the Musical Association, but to the bicycle clubs and the polytechnics. *The World* catered to a different sort of readership. But even then, readability remained one of Shaw's principal aims: "I could make deaf stockbrokers read my two pages on music," he once wrote about his contributions to *The World*, "the alleged joke being that I knew nothing about it. The real joke was that I knew all about it."[9] He himself said at the time (1892) that it was his special merit to have always seen plainly that "in this Philistine country a musical critic, if he is to do any good, must put off the learned commentator, and become a propagandist, versed in all the arts that attract a crowd, and wholly regardless of his personal dignity."[10]

But while the music critic's personal dignity could well be dispensed with, his personality must remain an integral part of his writings. "We cannot get away," Shaw wrote, "from the critic's tempers, his impatiences, his sorenesses, his friendships, his spite, his enthusiasms (amatory and other), nay, his very politics and religion if they are touched by what he criticises." It should be a point of honor with the critic not to conceal those things, not to offer his product as "the dispassionate dictum of infallible omniscience." If the public reacts by coldly saying, "We dont want to know the sort of person you are: we want to know whether such a work or artist or performance is good or bad," then it is up to the critic to reply, "How on earth can you tell how much my opinion on that point is worth unless you know what sort of person I am?"[11]

Criticism without personal feeling was not worth reading. Indeed, it was the very capacity for making good or bad art a personal matter that made a man a critic: "The artist who accounts for my disparagement by alleging personal animosity on my part is quite right: when people do less than their best, and do that less at once badly and self-complacently, I hate them, loathe them, detest them, long to tear them limb from limb and strew them in gobbets about the stage or platform." On the other hand, really fine artists inspired him with such warm personal regard that he wrote his notices "without the smallest reference to such monstrous conceits as justice, impartiality, and the rest of the ideals." Indeed, it was more than mere personal feeling, it was passion that raged in him. "Let all young artists look to it, and pay no heed to the idiots who declare that criticism should be free from personal feeling."[12]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Shaw certainly made his personal likes and dislikes apparent. He stayed away from Gilbert and Sullivan whenever he could, convinced that Gilbert's paradoxical wit was both trifling and morally unjustifiable, and that there was not the slightest musical novelty in Sullivan's scores.[13] Gounod's sacred works were anathema to him. When Gounod's *Redemption* was performed at the People's Palace, Shaw wrote, "I did not go, because I cannot stand listening to a band and chorus practising the chromatic scale in slow time for nearly three hours even when it is harmonised by Gounod. Progression by semitones is too gradual for my ardent nature."[14]

If Shaw made no secret of his dislikes, he was equally unreticent about his belief in his own abilities, particularly that of expressing himself clearly. Exasperated by a correspondent from Camberwell who had distorted the meaning of one of his articles, he commented that "it is infuriating to be misunderstood in this way, particularly as it is admitted in literary circles that I write the best English in the world. For the future, I positively decline to answer letters founded on inexcusable misreadings of my column."[15] His critical persona was that of the irascible perfectionist who always said what he thought in no uncertain terms, whose business it was "to find fault until the limit of attainable perfection is reached."[16] To a lady who had given a "recital-lecture" on Chopin that left much to be desired, he apologized for making her lecture the text for a ponderous discourse on lecturing in general. But then he added: "If the musical lecture is going to become an institution, it is my business to pounce on its weak points, with a view to its improvement, and, finally, to such perfection as it is capable of."[17]

A music critic, to be worth his salt, must be totally frank, so that he might come to possess the independence that springs only from resolute truthfulness.[18] If, for example, a singer's stoutness interfered with the verisimilitude of his performance, his feelings should no more be spared than those of a gymnast, a prizefighter, a jockey, or a dancer. Fritz Plank, at least two thirds of whose bulk, Shaw commented, "must consist of the national beverage," should not have undertaken the role of Klingsor at Bayreuth without getting into better physical training.[19] Great works of art deserved no less than the best on the part of their executants. As Shaw put it:

> I *hate* performers who debase great works of art: I long for their annihilation: if my criticisms were flaming thunderbolts, no prudent Life or Fire Insurance Company would entertain a proposal from any singer within my range, or from the lessee of any opera house or concert room within my circuit.[20]

There was no point in "kindly" criticism, which saw good in everything: "I prefer sermons in stones—and to throw them."[21] How musical performances would improve if all critics of fine taste carried javelins—and used them![22]

Shaw himself was always well armed with javelins and did not hesitate to use them when he believed their use was required, even though the victims were often well-known artists who had merited his praise on other occasions: the pleasingly plump Madame Albani, for instance, who, undergoing the agonies of death as Violetta in *La Traviata*, "robs the sick bed and the medicine bottles of half their terrors by her reassuring air of doing as well as can be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

expected";[23] the great Victor Maurel, as Don Giovanni, who, at the entrance of the statue, "behaved very much as if his uncle had dropped in unexpectedly in the middle of a bachelor's supper party";[24] Miss Rose Williams prettily singing "A man's a man for a' that" on Burns night in such a way that "it would have damped a whole revolution had there been one on at the moment";[25] Mrs. Lillian Henschel whose interpretation of Mendelssohn's "Hear My Prayer" impelled Shaw to ask her "to hear *my* prayer and never again meddle with Mendelssohn";[26] and Marie Brema, the first English operatic singer to perform at Bayreuth, whose Ortrud was "all grit," and who "would be improved by being passed half a dozen times through a particularly heavy pair of millstones."[27]

But it was not just individual artists who earned Shaw's righteous wrath by the deficiencies of their singing and acting. There was that *Flying Dutchman* at Covent Garden in which "the violence of the waves sometimes lifted them entirely from their bed, and revealed strange submarine monsters disporting themselves in perpendicular jumps below";[28] matched, perhaps, though hardly eclipsed, by the performance of Boito's *Mefistofele* in which the scene in Faust's study was played with the lights turned up, "and stage carpenters bustling through the gauze and cheerfully shouting, 'Pull it back, sir? Yessir. Go on, Tom,' and so forth."[29] When, during the anvil chorus in *Trovatore*, gypsy blacksmiths deposited a glowing bar with its red-hot end on a wooden chair, where it lay during the rest of the act without either cooling itself or damaging the furniture, Shaw "could not help feeling that the illusion of the scene was gone."[30]

Composers too were not immune from Shaw's javelin throws, some of which, we may now feel, might have been misdirected. Not the one, to be sure, aimed at those "distinguished professors possessing no faculty for original composition, who once a year or so produce a work to be applauded for a moment by their pupils and friends and then forgotten."[31] But truth to tell, Shaw was capable of writing about Schubert's great C-major symphony that "a more exasperatingly brainless composition was never put on paper."[32] As for the Brahms *Requiem*—"that unspeakable work"—listening to it more than once belonged among those sacrifices that should not be demanded twice from any man.[33] A performance of the same composer's clarinet quintet moved Shaw to comment that "Brahms's enormous gift of music is paralleled by nothing on earth but Mr. Gladstone's gift of words: it is a verbosity which outfaces its own commonplaceness by dint of sheer magnitude."[34] On another occasion, Shaw remarked that it seemed quite obvious that the real Brahms was nothing more than a sentimental voluptuary with a wonderful ear.[35] At the age of eighty, however, he made amends. In 1936, almost half a century after Shaw had spoken of Brahms's music as "at bottom only a prodigiously elaborated compound of inherent reminiscences,"[36] he called that description hasty, not to say silly, and expressed the hope that it would serve as a warning to critics who knew too much. In every composer's work, so Shaw went on in his apologia, there are passages that are part of the common stock of music of the time. When a new genius arises, whose idiom is both unfamiliar and disagreeable, it is easy for a critic who knows the common stock to recognize its contributions to the new work, but fail to be aware of the original complexion put upon it.[37] There is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

certainly no doubt that during his years as a music critic, while Shaw liked some of Brahms's chamber music, he did not have much use for many compositions we now tend to regard as among that composer's greatest works.

As for Mendelssohn—Shaw much admired his *Midsummer Night's Dream* music: "How original, how exquisitely happy, how radiant with pure light, absolutely without shadow!"[38] but was put off by what he regarded as Mendelssohn's conventional sentimentality and what he dubbed his despicable oratorio-mongering. He was, so Shaw summed up, the great composer of the century for all those to whom Tennyson was its great poet.[39] His view of Wagner was, of course, very different; he was a passionate as well as knowledgeable Wagnerian all his life. "The Perfect Wagnerite," reprinted in this collection, remains to this day perhaps the most illuminating essay ever written about the composer of the *Ring*. But there are other, incidental comments about Wagner in Shaw's articles, both startling and revealing. One in particular cries out to be quoted: "I assert with the utmost confidence," Shaw wrote in 1891, "that in 1991 it will be seen quite clearly that Wagner was the end of the XIX century, or Beethoven, school, instead of the beginning of the XX century school; just as Mozart's most perfect music is the last sound of the XVIII century, and not the first of the XIX."[40] There are glimpses of Wagner himself—he visited London, to conduct his own works, in 1877—of his "tense neuralgic glare at the players as they waited for the beat," and of the laurel wreath placed upon his brow after one of the concerts, a distinction "probably more gratifying to his feelings than favorable to the dignity of his appearance."[41]

There are glimpses of other composer-conductors as well: of Dvorák conducting his D-minor symphony (now numbered seven) in 1885, his music suggesting not the blinding sunlight of an Italian street, but nothing more blinding than the lights of a fishing village on a Northern rockbound coast on a starlit night;[42] and of Grieg (in 1889) accompanying his wife's rendition of some of his songs, "a small, swift, busy, earnest man, with the eyes of a rhapsode, and in his hair and complexion the indescribable ashen tint that marks a certain type of modern Norseman."[43] But no less memorable than those personal impressions are Shaw's general comments on great composers, old and new. Of Beethoven, Shaw writes that the thing that marks him out from all the greatest pattern composers is "his disturbing quality, his power of unsettling us and imposing his giant moods on us."[44] Of Elgar's music, he says that it is neither secondhand Handel, Mozart, nor Mendelssohn, but "music which is as characteristically English as a Shropshire country house and stable. . . . Whether you like it or not, it is the characteristic expression of a certain type of English breeding, and very good breeding at that."[45]

In reading these volumes, one is struck time and again by the catholicity of Shaw's taste. He championed Purcell's religious music; he hailed "three times three" the proposal to republish Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book in modern notation, but otherwise without addition or omission (it was subsequently issued as the Fitzwilliam Virginal Book); and he welcomed as "a revelation" the performance, by a visiting Dutch choir and organist in 1885, of music by Jan Pieter Sweelinck.[46] For the rest of his life, he considered that concert as one of the very finest and purest he had ever heard.[47] In one of his frequent attacks on the English tradition of murdering Handel's church music by using enormous

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

choruses—in the mistaken belief that four thousand singers must be four thousand times as impressive as one!—he compared the powerful fortissimo the Dutch conductor De Lange had got, almost thirty years earlier, from his twenty choristers, with the feeble echoes of it that most contemporary English conductors were able to extract from two hundred times as many voices.[48] Lest it be thought, by the way, that Shaw's catholicity of taste was confined to professionally performed music, it is worth pointing out that in 1891 he bestowed high praise on a brass band of shoemakers, conducted by a compositor, playing for the pure love of their art on the race course at Northampton one Sunday afternoon: "They gave us a Gloria of Haydn's with a delicacy of execution and a solemn reverence for the old master which were extraordinarily refreshing after the stale professional routine playing of the London concert platforms. It was like seeing a withering flower put into water."[49]

Shaw is concerned not just with singers, players, and composers, but also with the whole ritual of musical performances in late nineteenth century London. There was, for example, the excessive length of concerts, a relic of the time when audiences kept up a continuous buzz of conversation, and nobody felt required to concentrate unduly on what was being played. In 1894 Shaw suggested that no concert of high-class music should last longer than an hour and three quarters, and that the addition of any item whatsoever to a performance of Beethoven's Ninth "should be punished by imprisonment without option."[50] In the stalls at Covent Garden, evening dress was *de rigueur*, compelling Shaw to attend the opera "in the cheapest, ugliest, and least wholesome suit of clothes I possess."[51] In the mid-eighties, the best concert tickets cost half a guinea, general admission half a crown. Much to Shaw's indignation, programs, containing a mixture of historical information and technical detail, sold for a shilling each.[52] Some artists, female vocalists in particular, were willing to go to almost any lengths in quest of encores: A prettily whispered conference with the conductor or accompanist, the way in which the sheet of music was held, a timely lapse of memory when the singer had the gift of displaying confusion agreeably—all those strategies were helpful in that particular quest.[53]

Singers often traveled with enormous wreaths and baskets of flowers that were handed to them at the conclusion of their recitals, and invariably received with astonishment. One instance of this sort of planned surprise was provided by Alice J. Shaw, an American lady whistler—not, Shaw felt it necessary to point out, the American Lady Whistler—a performer known as *la belle siffleuse*.[54] But ecstatic scenes habitually transpired when the very greatest singers brought their recitals to a conclusion. After one of Adelina Patti's appearances at the Albert Hall, in 1893, "there were bouquets, raptures, effusions, kissings of children, graceful sharings of the applause with *obbligato* players—in short, the usual exhibition of the British bourgeoisie in the part of Bottom and the *prima donna* in the part of Titania."[55] As for what happened in the presence of royalty, "there are always a number of people at every concert who, the moment they catch sight of a royal face, spring up as if they saw a chance of being knighted on the spot."[56]

Those last two comments make it clear that Shaw can hardly be accused of idealizing the musical audiences of his time. When in 1877, people were invited

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

to be seated at ten minutes before eight in St. James's Hall, so that the Kyrie of Bach's B-minor Mass might be heard without interruption, the majority arrived punctually at ten minutes past.[57] A few years later, at a Covent Garden Promenade Concert—the only place where a Londoner (in 1885) could hear a full orchestra for a shilling—Madame Enriquez sang Spohr's "Rose Softly Blooming" far too fast; but "owing to an unusual proportion of idiots at large in the promenade, the song was encored."[58] In Gounod's *Mors et Vita*, an orchestral "Sleep of the Dead" was interrupted by trumpets calling the dead to judgment:

> Imagine half a dozen cornets playing the augmented triad in chords and fanfares; and connect that with your ideas of the last trumpet if you can. We are apt to pity the ignorant Asiatic who is overborne by the awful majesty of the hundred-armed idol in his temple; but the people who listen reverently to half a dozen cornets in the Albert Hall, and feel their conception of the apocalyptic vision realised by it, must surely be hardly in a position to give away much brain-weight to the simple Oriental.[59]

The pianist Bernhard Stavenhagen was rapturously received, even though he rapped out Beethoven's earlier piano concertos *staccatissimo*, "like a succession of postman's knocks." And why? Because he had brought his new bride with him, with whom he was visibly and abjectly infatuated: "In England there is nothing so popular in a public performer as perfect domesticity, except perhaps the extreme reverse."[60] In one of his reviews, Shaw even goes so far as to comment on "the indifference of the mob to exalted considerations of all kinds."[61]

And yet—that is not the whole story. Shaw strongly objected to "the fallacy of the commonplace theory that the public dislike good music, which is so frequently advanced as an excuse for giving audiences the worst possible value for their money." He was, in fact, quite capable of employing the word "mob" in a complimentary sense, as when he remarked that "the many heads of the mob are perfectly 'level' on the subject of Mozart, . . . [as] shown by the fact that Figaro or the Don will still draw a house when nothing else will, though not a single perfectly satisfactory representation of either opera is on record."[62] As far as Shaw was concerned, musical discrimination was certainly not a monopoly of the middle and upper classes. At a Victoria Hall concert for working people, for instance, he noted that the audience received trivial musical numbers weakly rendered with polite indifference, reserving its enthusiasm for those pieces both inherently superior and better performed. "There may have been 1,500 people in the hall, and if the whole of them had been skilled musicians the verdict on each item could not have been more discriminating."[63] It was, to be sure, unfortunate that the Victoria Hall catered only to a clientele pledged to temperance: "Sobriety is a good thing and healthy amusement is another, but the working man's tastes will not be elevated by the association of music with total abstinence."[64]

When Shaw wrote of "the working man," he did not do so naively. "I never speak of 'working men,' " he wrote in 1889, "as if they were a consignment of regulation boots, all alike except as to assorted sizes."[65] He knew that the working class, like other classes, contained a great variety of human beings, with very different tastes, inclinations, and beliefs. He also knew that econom-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ics and music were closely linked; that it was, for example, nonsensical to single out and exalt the workingman as THE true lover of Beethoven. Shaw disposed of that romantic idea, put forward by a young composer named Marshall-Hall, in a single sentence: "For Beethoven purposes society is divided into people who can afford to keep a piano and go to operas and concerts, and people who cannot."[66] The maximum relish for art was certainly not to be found among the idle rich. But neither was it to be found among those who, worn out by muscular toil, could not help but fall asleep if they sat quiet and silent for five minutes in the course of an evening.

> Take a laborer's son; let him do his board-schooling mostly on an empty stomach; bring him up in a rookery tenement; take him away from school at thirteen; offer him the alternative of starvation or 12 to 16 hours work a day at jerry building, adulterated manufactures, coupling railway wagons, collecting tramway fares, field labor, or what not, in return for food and lodging which no 'animated clothes-peg' would offer to his hunter; bully him; slave-drive him; teach him by every word and look that he is not wanted among respectable people, and that his children are not fit to be spoken to by their children. This is a pretty receipt for making an appreciator of Beethoven.[67]

Before the mass of working people could come to like good music, they must have more leisure as well as more money. To accomplish both those aims, the English social structure must be changed—and that could only be brought about in the arena of politics. That is why, Shaw wrote in 1894, he was compelled to join the Fabian Society and "wildly masquerade as a politician," so that he might agitate for a better distribution of piano-purchasing power.[68]

That was by no means the sole echo of Shaw's political beliefs to be detected in his writings on music, both during his period as a reviewer and later on. On Christmas Eve, 1890, he objected to the supposition of many rich people in London that they had nothing but their own whims to consult in the disposition of their incomes: "I demur to this, and contend that they are as much bound to support orchestral concerts by their subscriptions as they are to support hospitals."[69] Thirty years later, in a speech entitled "The Municipalization of Music," he placed responsibility for supplying music and art not on the rich alone, but ratepayers in general. Coarse pleasures always brought disease, drunkenness, and degradation of character. The result? Not only a lowering of personality and personal stamina, but a rise in police and hospital rates. The most parsimonious ratepayer ought to be persuaded that it would in the long run make his town both wealthier and healthier if he would vote for an abundant and generous municipal provision for the arts.[70]

Thus these pages reveal not just Shaw the strictly musical reformer, who agitated for daily orchestral concerts in London, with permanent engagements and pensions for conductors and players, as well as adequate rehearsal time; who wanted Wagner's operas performed as part of the repertory of an English opera house; and who asked that more attention be paid both by critics and the public in general to music in the provinces, whether it was performed in Manchester under Hallé or in Richmond by an amateur orchestra.[71] His articles on music also reveal Shaw's concern with broadening the appeal of good music to the widest possible spectrum of the population. He pressed for a national opera, with all its works performed in English.[72] He advocated the production

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of clavichords which, as Arnold Dolmetsch had proved, were excellent as musical instruments, pleasant to look at, and most important, could be sold for the price of a fourth-rate piano.[73] He thought that admission charges to Crystal Palace concerts were absolutely prohibitive for four out of five Londoners, and recommended that they be drastically reduced.[74] And he wanted more secular music for the workingman, because oratorios made him feel as if he were in church, "which is the most horrible sensation known to him short of actual bodily pain, because there is no place where he is forced to feel the shabbiness of his clothes and the unsocial contempt in which he is held by church-going respectability, as he is forced to feel it there."[75]

Shaw, himself a staunch secularist, could not resist using churches and what went on in them as targets for his wit as well as his social indignation. In 1888, reviewing a Crystal Palace concert, he reported that the ladies of the choir rendered Schubert's setting of the Twenty-third Psalm "with that reverent avoidance of fervor, and even of meaning, which Englishwomen display whenever they experience, from any cause, the sensation of being in church."[76] But Shaw's wit did not really need to be set off by ecclesiastical shortcomings and ineptitudes. Mercurial, sprightly, irrepressible, it disports itself everywhere in these pages: in his verbal ingenuity, his eye and ear for comic detail, his epigrams, and his unfailing sense of the absurd. Muted violins hiss "like a badly-adjusted limelight."[77] Four expert cornetists in the orchestra produce nothing but "inebriated gugglings."[78] A tenor—it seems he was Shaw's brother-in-law—is "cherubically adipose."[79] The great conductor Hermann Levi possesses "a calm rabbinical eye."[80] Madame Marie Roze "appeared too conscious of her own sprightliness."[81] Mr. Barton McGuckin's delivery of Lohengrin's declamation was not improved by such locutions as "In distant londs . . . a costle stonds . . . Montsolvot, etc."[82] At the Crystal Palace, nothing was allowed to distract the attention of the audience from Gounod's *Redemption* "except a large signboard with the inscription 'OYSTERS.' "[83] At Covent Garden, the black-haired lady sitting directly in front of him "had stuck over her right ear the pitiable corpse of a large white bird, which looked exactly as if someone had killed it by stamping on its breast, and then nailed it to the lady's temple, which was presumably of sufficient solidity to bear the operation."[84]

At a performance of *Aida* in 1888, Mancinelli conducted the court and temple scenes barbarically, "evidently believing that the ancient Egyptians were a tribe of savages, instead of, as far as one can ascertain, considerably more advanced than the society now nightly contemplating in 'indispensable evening dress' the back of Signor Mancinelli's head."[85] In the Albert Hall Choral Society's *Messiah*, "Unto Us a Child Is Born" was sung correctly, and with admirable purity of tone; "but in spirit and feeling, it might have been the congratulations offered to a respectable suburban family on the latest addition to the nursery: one whose name could not by any stretch of the imagination be called Wonderful! Counselor!"[86] Nordica "turned Elsa of Brabant into Elsa of Bond Street, by appearing in a corset," while Madame Goddard "was more like the Lady of Shalott working away at her loom than a musician at a pianoforte."[87] Sir Joseph Barnby conducted Berlioz's *Faust* in such a manner that "instead of the brimstonish orgy in Auerbach's cellar we have a soirée of the Young Men's Christian Association."[88]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Incongruity usually triggered Shaw's sense of the ridiculous, as when he reported in his best deadpan style that, in an exhibition of ancient instruments seen in what purported to be their original settings, "the illusion is greatly heightened by the band of the Coldstream Guards playing a selection from the Mikado outside."[89] He also found it hard to resist remarking upon human folly. After a performance of *Meistersinger* at Covent Garden (in 1889), "the proceedings ended with a tremendous ovation to Mr. Harris, who fished out of the wing a stout gentleman generally but erroneously supposed to be Wagner"[90]— then six years in his grave!

In reviewing books about music, as he did on occasion, Shaw showed an unerring eye for the comic. From J. P. Sandlands's *How to Develop General Vocal Power*, he quotes: "The word horse calls up into the presence-chamber of the mind a certain animal with four legs and without feathers."[91] And he felt bound to relay the account provided by the American author of *The Home Correspondence of Amy Fay* of her pianistic studies under Karl Tausig. When she first played to him, "he kept calling out all through it in German, 'Terrible! Shocking! O Gott! O Gott!' which naturally made Miss Fay cry, although she was resolved not to be beaten, and finished her piece with heroic cussedness before giving way."[92]

"It is no part of the function of grave musical criticism to create uproarious mirth," Shaw wrote in 1885[93]—not without irony, since he must have known that many of his articles did just that. But the irony only went so far. Shaw's primary aim in his criticism was neither to induce laughter nor even to change the social scene in such a way that good music could be brought to the people at large. It was, rather, to foster, or at least to look for, perfection, and to celebrate that wherever and whenever he found it. When all is said and done, when we have paid due tribute to Shaw the musicologist, Shaw the wit, Shaw the controversialist, Shaw the social reformer, a perusal of these massive three volumes leaves us above all with the feeling that here is someone who not only knows how difficult it is to attain true greatness, whether in performance or composition, but who also never stops trying to accomplish something almost equally difficult—namely, to write about it in such a way that we, the readers, are forced to nod in accord, thinking: "Yes, that is what it's all about; that is how it must be."

"That natural gift of the highest expression, which is so rare, and so impossible of acquisition, that we have no right to complain of its absence"; the merits "of that rare type of which it is commonly said that they are born and not acquired, and which constitutes the arbitrary attribute which we call genius"—these qualities do indeed seldom make themselves felt.[94] And when they appear, they are in their essence indescribable. Shaw knows this, but nonetheless chronicles epiphanies when they occur. "If any words," he writes, "could do justice to the poetic expression and *beauty* of touch which distinguishes Madame [Clara] Schumann's art, they are such as would appear overstrained and out of place in these columns. But we may at least recommend [to] the many pianists who set such store by the vulgar quality of brilliancy never to omit an opportunity for studying the greater attributes of pianoforte playing as exemplified by one whose like we shall not easily hear again."[95] The moment Nordica began to sing Elsa at Bayreuth, Shaw tells us, "the sound of real

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

singing so enchanted the Germans that it set them all singing too; we all shouted for joy; and I have no doubt the morning star would have joined in if that had been possible at a quarter past six in the evening."[96]

In June 1885, Shaw heard Hans Richter (who became his favorite London conductor) conduct Mozart's E-flat symphony (no. 39). At the time, his only comment was that Richter did not miss a single point.[97] But a year later, he recalled that concert as the first occasion on which any living Londoner of reasonable age was reached by the Mozart enchantment. "It was an exploit that shewed Richter to be a master of his art as no Valkyrie ride or fire charm could have done."[98] What made it so memorable? The only clue we have is Shaw's phrase describing Richter's performance of the finale of another Mozart symphony, the *Linz* (no. 36). The middle section, which had taken Shaw in by its innocent look on paper, "astonished me by its majesty, and by a combination of vivacity with grandeur."[99] What a marvelous phrase! It reverberates in the mind almost like one of the composer's own.

Mozart was, in any event, the alpha and omega of Shaw's love of music. He adored Wagner: he praised Haydn for "the inexhaustible invention and unwithering freshness of that evergreen genius";[100] and what he said about Handel hit the nail on the head:—"All the sermons of Bossuet could not convince [Melchior] Grimm that God existed. The four bars in which Handel [in his *Messiah*] finally affirms 'the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace,' would have struck Grimm into the gutter, as by a thunderbolt."[101] But it is when he talks of Mozart's cadences and half-closes coming "sometimes like answers to unspoken questions of the heart, sometimes like ghostly echoes from another world"; when, in 1885, he calls *Le Nozze di Figaro* "still as fresh and wonderful as it was when it was composed nearly a century ago"; when he remarks, apropos of the fact that nobody knew where exactly Mozart was buried, that he was not—that, "depend upon it, they [the mourners] had no sooner put up their umbrellas and bolted for the nearest shelter, than he got up, shook off his bones into the common grave of the people, and soared off into universality"—then we know that Shaw speaks from the center of his innermost being.[102]

As a boy, Shaw had begun his self-tuition at the piano with the overture to *Don Giovanni*. Ever since then, he had looked for a satisfactory performance of that opera, but decided (in 1891) that Mozart's turn would hardly come in his time.[103] About Gounod's declaration that *Don Giovanni* had been to him all his life a revelation of perfection, a miracle, a work without fault, Shaw smiled indulgently, "since I cannot afford to give myself away so generously." But then he went on to admit that his own fundamental attitude toward Mozart was the same as Gounod's. "Everyone appears a sentimental, hysterical bungler in comparison when anything brings his work vividly back to me."[104]

Shaw was to pay his own special tribute to Mozart and the Don in *Man and Superman*. But these three thousand pages of musical criticism, with their ceaseless search for perfection, their sparkling good humor, and their awe before the ultimate mystery of genius may be considered as another kind of tribute. Everyone who admires great music greatly performed, clear and vigorous prose, and the uninhibited play of wit and ideas should read them. But the three most moving pages do not, in fact, belong to the realm of criticism.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

They reproduce Shaw's own musical setting of Shelley's verses beginning "When the Lamp Is Shattered."[105] This, dated June 23, 1883, is one of three of Shaw's compositions that have survived. It, like the others, was designed for his own entertainment and that of his friends. The second stanza reads:

As music and splendor
Survive not the lamp and the lute,
The heart's echoes render
No song when the spirit is mute.

Luckily for us, the spirit of the versatile Signor di Bassetto was far from mute.

REFERENCES

[1]Bernard Shaw, *Shaw's Music: The Complete Music Criticism in three volumes*, edited by Dan H. Laurence. (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1981). All subsequent references are to this edition.

[2]I, p. 557.
[3]I, pp. 30-31.
[4]I, p. 31.
[5]II, pp. 433-34.
[6]I, p. 908.
[7]II, p. 808.
[8]I, p. 58.
[9]I, p. 7.
[10]II. p. 531
[11]III, p. 238.
[12]II, pp. 168-69.
[13]I, p. 871
[14]I, p. 603.
[15]I, p. 620.
[16]I, p. 681.
[17]III, pp. 57-58.
[18]I, p. 192.
[19]III, p. 315.
[20]III, p. 224.
[21]II, p. 207.
[22]I, p. 630.
[23]II, p. 326.
[24]II, p. 339.
[25]II, p. 530.
[26]II, p. 800.
[27]III, p. 287.
[28]I, p. 141.
[29]I, p. 521.
[30]II, p. 186.
[31]I, p. 79.
[32]II, p. 581.
[33]II, p. 235.
[34]II, p. 614.
[35]II, p. 916.
[36]I, p. 540.
[37]Idem.
[38]I, p. 894.
[39]I, p. 565.
[40]II, pp. 480-81.
[41]I, p. 208; I, p. 127.
[42]I, p. 236.
[43]I, p. 578.
[44]III, p. 747.
[45]III, pp. 630-31.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[46]I, p. 373; III, p. 162; I, p. 313.
[47]III, p. 214.
[48]III, pp. 640-41.
[49]II, pp. 420-21.
[50]III, p. 206.
[51]I, p. 713.
[52]I, p. 410.
[53]I, p. 188.
[54]I, p. 760.
[55]II, p. 906.
[56]II, p. 379.
[57]I, p. 113.
[58]I, p. 341.
[59]I, p. 392.
[60]II, p. 473.
[61]I, p. 187.
[62]I, p. 178; I, p. 261.
[63]I, p. 199.
[64]I, p. 198.
[65]I, p. 828.
[66]I, p. 649.
[67]I, pp. 649-50.
[68]III, p. 122.
[69]II, p. 234.
[70]III, pp. 738-39.
[71]II, pp. 710-11; II, p. 681; I, p. 926; II, pp. 862-67.
[72]I, pp. 172, 175; II, p. 746.
[73]III, pp. 261-62.
[74]II, pp. 708-09.
[75]I, p. 824.
[76]I, p. 532.
[77]I, p. 217.
[78]I, p. 572.
[79]I, p. 780.
[80]II, p. 138.
[81]I, p. 264.
[82]II, p. 52.
[83]I, p. 461.
[84]III, p. 587.
[85]I, p. 519.
[86]I, p. 542.
[87]I, p. 647; I, p. 878.
[88]III, p. 22.
[89]I, p. 358.
[90]I, p. 706.
[91]I, p. 473.
[92]I, p. 444.
[93]I, p. 249.
[94]I, p. 87; I, p. 130.
[95]I, pp. 97-98.
[96]III, p. 283.
[97]I, p. 268.
[98]II, p. 86.
[99]Idem.
[100]I, p. 270.
[101]III, p. 640.
[102]I, pp. 508-09; I, p. 284; II, p. 68.
[103]II, p. 334.
[104]II, p. 482.
[105]I, pp. 205-07.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ROBERT DARNTON

What Is the History of Books?

"*Histoire du livre*" in France, "*Geschichte des Buchwesens*" in Germany, "history of books" or "of the book" in English-speaking countries—its name varies from place to place, but everywhere it is being recognized as an important new discipline. It might even be called the social and cultural history of communication by print, if that were not such a mouthful, because its purpose is to understand how ideas were transmitted through print and how exposure to the printed word affected the thought and behavior of mankind during the last five hundred years. Some book historians pursue their subject deep into the period before the invention of movable type. Some students of printing concentrate on newspapers, broadsides, and other forms besides the book. The field can be extended and expanded in many ways; but for the most part, it concerns books since the time of Gutenberg, an area of research that has developed so rapidly during the last few years, that it seems likely to win a place alongside fields like the history of science and the history of art in the canon of scholarly disciplines.

Whatever the history of books may become in the future, its past shows how a field of knowledge can take on a distinct scholarly identity. It arose from the convergence of several disciplines on a common set of problems, all of them having to do with the process of communication. Initially, the problems took the form of concrete questions in unrelated branches of scholarship: What were Shakespeare's original texts? What caused the French Revolution? What is the connection between culture and social stratification? In pursuing those questions, scholars found themselves crossing paths in a no-man's-land located at the intersection of a half-dozen fields of study. They decided to constitute a field of their own and to invite in historians, literary scholars, sociologists, librarians, and anyone else who wanted to understand the book as a force in history. The history of books began to acquire its own journals, research centers, conferences, and lecture circuits. It accumulated tribal elders as well as Young Turks. And although it has not yet developed passwords or secret handshakes or its own population of Ph.D.'s, its adherents can recognize one another by the glint in their eyes. They belong to a common cause, one of the few sectors in the human sciences where there is a mood of expansion and a flurry of fresh ideas.

To be sure, the history of the history of books did not begin yesterday. It stretches back to the scholarship of the Renaissance, if not beyond; and it began in earnest during the nineteenth century, when the study of books as material objects led to the rise of analytical bibliography in England. But the current

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

work represents a departure from the established strains of scholarship, which may be traced to their nineteenth century origins through back issues of *The Library* and *Börsenblatt für den Deutschen Buchhandel* or theses in the Ecole des Chartes. The new strain developed during the 1960s in France, where it took root in institutions like the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes and spread through publications like *L'Apparition du livre* (1958), by Lucien Febvre and Henri-Jean Martin, and *Livre et société dans la France du XVIIIe siècle* (two volumes 1965 and 1970) by a group connected with the VIe section of the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Etudes.

The new book historians brought the subject within the range of themes studied by the "*Annales* school" of socioeconomic history. Instead of dwelling on fine points of bibliography, they tried to uncover the general pattern of book production and consumption over long stretches of time. They compiled statistics from requests for *privilèges* (a kind of copyright), analyzed the contents of private libraries, and traced ideological currents through neglected genres like the *bibliothèque bleue* (primitive paperbacks). Rare books and fine editions had no interest for them; they concentrated instead on the most ordinary sort of books, because they wanted to discover the literary experience of ordinary readers. They put familiar phenomena like the Counter Reformation and the Enlightenment in an unfamiliar light by showing how much traditional culture outweighed the avant-garde in the literary fare of the entire society. Although they did not come up with a firm set of conclusions, they demonstrated the importance of asking new questions, using new methods, and tapping new sources.[1]

Their example spread throughout Europe and the United States, reinforcing indigenous traditions, such as reception studies in Germany and printing history in Britain. Drawn together by their commitment to a common enterprise, and animated by enthusiasm for new ideas, book historians began to meet, first in cafés, then in conferences. They created new journals—*Publishing History*, *Bibliography Newsletter*, *Nouvelles du livre ancien*, *Revue française d'histoire du livre* (new series), *Buchhandelsgeschichte*, and *Wolfenbütteler Notizen zur Buchgeschichte*. They founded new centers—the Institut d'Etude du Livre in Paris, the Arbeitskreis für Geschichte des Buchwesens in Wolfenbüttel, the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress. Special colloquia—in Geneva, Paris, Boston, Worcester, Wolfenbüttel, and Athens, to name only a few that took place in the late 1970s—disseminated their research on an international scale. In the brief span of two decades, the history of books had become a rich and varied field of study.

So rich did it prove, in fact, that it now looks less like a field than a tropical rain forest. The explorer can hardly make his way across it. At every step he becomes entangled in a luxuriant undergrowth of journal articles, and disoriented by the crisscrossing of disciplines—analytical bibliography pointing in this direction, the sociology of knowledge in that, while history, English, and comparative literature stake out overlapping territories. He is beset by claims to newness—"*la nouvelle bibliographie matérielle*," "the new literary history"—and bewildered by competing methodologies, which would have him collating editions, compiling statistics, decoding copyright law, wading through reams of manuscript, heaving at the bar of a reconstructed common press, and

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

psychoanalyzing the mental processes of readers. The history of books has become so crowded with ancillary disciplines, that one can no longer see its general contours. How can the book historian neglect the history of libraries, of publishing, of paper, type, and reading? But how can he master their technologies, especially when they appear in imposing foreign formulations, like *Geschichte der Appellstruktur* and *Bibliométrie bibliologique?* It is enough to make one want to retire to a rare book room and count watermarks.

To get some distance from interdisciplinarity run riot, and to see the subject as a whole, it might be useful to propose a general model for analyzing the way books come into being and spread through society. To be sure, conditions have varied so much from place to place and from time to time since the invention of movable type, that it would be vain to expect the biography of every book to conform to the same pattern. But printed books generally pass through roughly the same life cycle. It could be described as a communications circuit that runs from the author to the publisher (if the bookseller does not assume that role), the printer, the shipper, the bookseller, and the reader. The reader completes the circuit, because he influences the author both before and after the act of composition. Authors are readers themselves. By reading and associating with other readers and writers, they form notions of genre and style and a general sense of the literary enterprise, which affects their texts, whether they are composing Shakespearean sonnets or directions for assembling radio kits. A writer may respond in his writing to criticisms of his previous work or anticipate reactions that his text will elicit. He addresses implicit readers and hears from explicit reviewers. So the circuit runs full cycle. It transmits messages, transforming them en route, as they pass from thought to writing to printed characters and back to thought again. Book history concerns each phase of this process and the process as a whole, in all its variations over space and time and in all its relations with other systems, economic, social, political, and cultural, in the surrounding environment.

That is a large undertaking. To keep their task within manageable proportions, book historians generally cut into one segment of the communications circuit and analyze it according to the procedures of a single discipline—printing, for example, which they study by means of analytical bibliography. But the parts do not take on their full significance unless they are related to the whole, and some holistic view of the book as a means of communication seems necessary if book history is to avoid being fragmented into esoteric specializations, cut off from each other by arcane techniques and mutual misunderstanding. The model shown in Figure 1 provides a way of envisaging the entire communication process. With minor adjustments, it should apply to all periods in the history of the printed book (manuscript books and book illustrations will have to be considered elsewhere), but I would like to discuss it in connection with the period I know best, the eighteenth century, and to take it up phase by phase, showing how each phase is related to (1) other activities that a given person has underway at a given point in the circuit, (2) other persons at the same point in other circuits, (3) other persons at other points in the same circuit, and (4) other elements in society. The first three considerations bear directly on the transmission of a text, while the last concerns outside influences, which could vary endlessly. For the sake of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

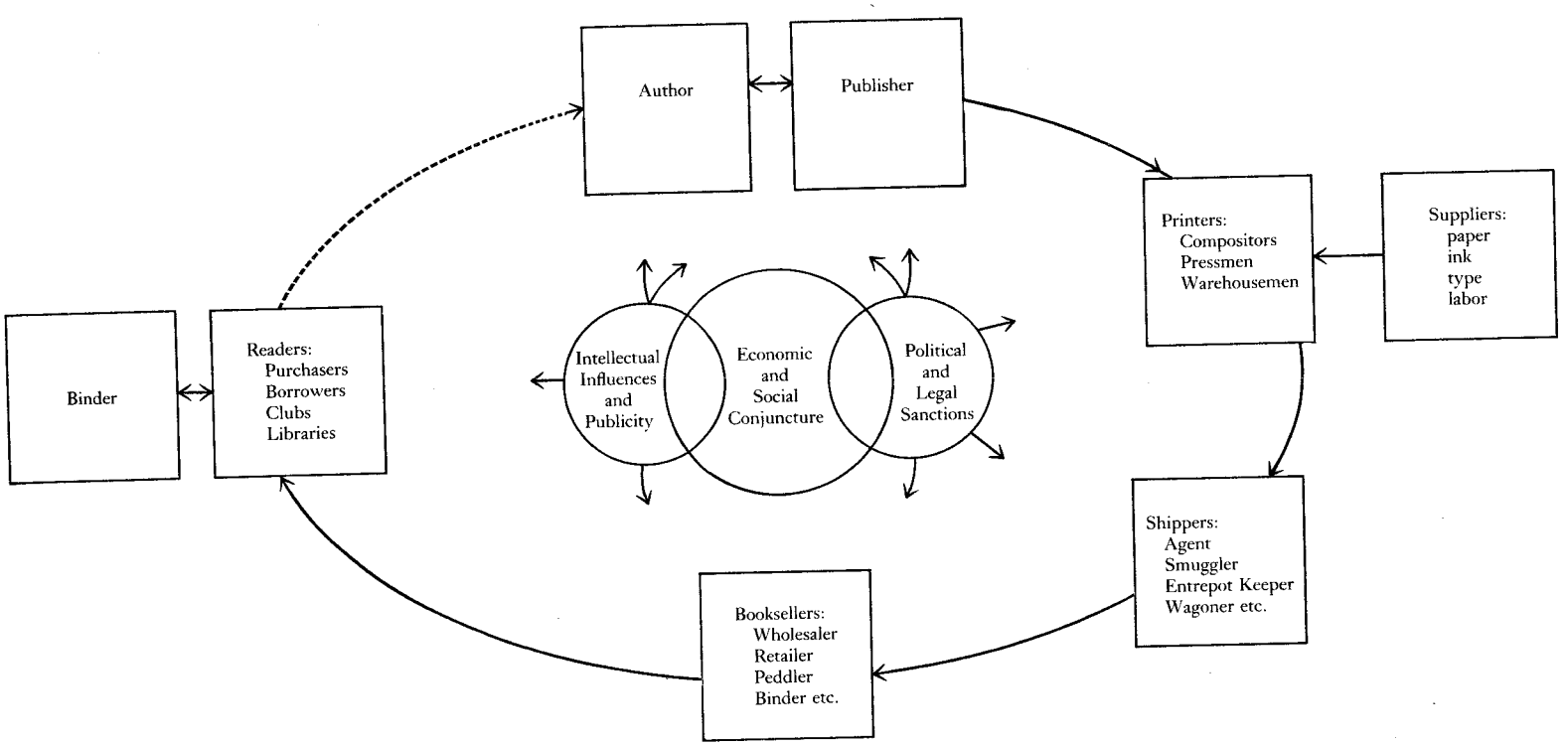


Figure 1. The Communications Circuit

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

simplicity, I have reduced the latter to the three general categories in the center of the diagram.

Models have a way of freezing human beings out of history. To put some flesh and blood on this one, and to show how it can make sense of an actual case, I will apply it to the publishing history of Voltaire's *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie*, an important work of the Enlightenment, and one that touched the lives of a great many eighteenth century bookmen. One could study the circuit of its transmission at any point—at the stage of its composition, for example, when Voltaire shaped its text and orchestrated its diffusion in order to promote his campaign against religious intolerance, as his biographers have shown; or at its printing, a stage in which bibliographical analysis helps to establish the multiplication of editions; or at the point of its assimilation in libraries, where, according to statistical studies by literary historians, Voltaire's works occupied an impressive share of shelf space.[2] But I would like to consider the least familiar link in the diffusion process, the role of the bookseller, taking Isaac-Pierre Rigaud of Montpellier as an example, and working through the four considerations mentioned above.[3]

1. On August 16, 1770, Rigaud ordered thirty copies of the nine-volume octavo edition of the *Questions*, which the Société typographique de Neuchâtel (STN) had recently begun to print in the Prussian principality of Neuchâtel on the Swiss side of the French-Swiss border. Rigaud generally preferred to read at least a few pages of a new book before stocking it, but he considered the *Questions* such a good bet, that he risked making a fairly large order for it, sight unseen. He did not have any personal sympathy for Voltaire. On the contrary, he deplored the philosphe's tendency to tinker with his books, adding and amending passages while cooperating with pirated editions behind the backs of the original publishers. Such practices produced complaints from customers, who objected to receiving inferior (or insufficiently audacious) texts. "It is astonishing that at the end of his career M. de Voltaire cannot refrain from duping booksellers," Rigaud complained to the STN. "It would not matter if all these little ruses, frauds, and deceits were blamed on the author. But unfortunately the printers and still more the retail booksellers are usually held responsible."[4] Voltaire made life hard for booksellers, but he sold well.

There was nothing Voltairean about most of the other books in Rigaud's shop. His sales catalogues show that he specialized somewhat in medical books, which were always in demand in Montpellier, thanks to the university's famous faculty of medicine. Rigaud also kept a discreet line of Protestant works, because Montpellier lay in Huguenot territory. And when the authorities looked the other way, he brought in a few shipments of forbidden books.[5] But he generally supplied his customers with books of all kinds, which he drew from an inventory worth at least forty-five thousand livres, the largest in Montpellier and probably in all Languedoc, according to a report from the intendant's *subdélégué*.[6]

Rigaud's way of ordering from the STN illustrates the character of his business. Unlike other large provincial dealers, who speculated on a hundred or more copies of a book when they smelled a best seller, he rarely ordered more than a half dozen copies of a single work. He read widely, consulted his

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

customers, took soundings by means of his commercial correspondence, and studied the catalogues that the STN and his other suppliers sent to him (by 1785 the STN's catalogue included 750 titles). Then he chose about ten titles and ordered just enough copies of them to make up a crate of fifty pounds, the minimum weight for shipment at the cheapest rate charged by the wagoners. If the books sold well, he reordered them; but he usually kept his orders rather small, and made four or five of them a year. In this way, he conserved capital, minimized risks, and built up such a large and varied stock, that his shop became a clearinghouse for literary demand of every kind in the region.

The pattern of Rigaud's orders, which stands out clearly from the STN's account books, shows that he offered his customers a little of everything—travel books, histories, novels, religious works, and the occasional scientific or philosophical treatise. Instead of following his own preferences, he seemed to transmit demand fairly accurately and to live according to the accepted wisdom of the book trade, which one of the STN's other customers summarized as follows: "The best book for a bookseller is a book that sells."[7] Given his cautious style of business, Rigaud's decision to place an advance order for thirty nine-volume sets of the *Questions sur l'Encyclopédie* seems especially significant. He would not have put so much money on a single work if he had not felt certain of the demand—and his later orders show that he had calculated correctly. On June 19, 1772, soon after receiving the last shipment of the last volume, Rigaud ordered another dozen sets; and he ordered two more two years later, although by then the STN had exhausted its stock. It had printed a huge edition, twenty-five hundred copies, approximately twice its usual pressrun, and the booksellers had fallen all over themselves in the rush to purchase it. So Rigaud's purchase was no aberration. It expressed a current of Voltaireanism that had spread far and wide among the reading public of the Old Regime.

2. How does the purchase of the *Questions* look when examined from the perspective of Rigaud's relations with the other booksellers of Montpellier? A book-trade almanac listed nine of them in 1777:[8]

Printer-Booksellers:	Aug. Franç. Rochard
	Jean Martel
Booksellers:	Isaac-Pierre Rigaud
	J. B. Faure
	Albert Pons
	Tournel
	Bascon
	Cézary
	Fontanel

But according to a report from a traveling salesman of the STN, there were only seven.[9] Rigaud and Pons had merged, and completely dominated the local trade; Cézary and Faure scraped along in the middle ranks; and the rest teetered on the brink of bankruptcy in precarious boutiques. The occasional binder and under-the-cloak peddler also provided a few books, most of them illegal, to the more adventuresome readers of the city. For example, the demoiselle Bringand,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

known as "the students' mother," stocked some forbidden fruit "under the bed on the room to the right on the second floor," according to the report of a raid that was engineered by the established booksellers.[10] The trade in most provincial cities fell into the same pattern, which can be envisaged as a series of concentric circles: at the center, one or two firms tried to monopolize the market; around the margin, a few small dealers survived by specializing in chapbooks and old volumes, by setting up reading clubs *(cabinets littéraires)* and binderies, or by peddling their wares in the back country; and beyond the fringe of legality, adventurers moved in and out of the market, selling forbidden literature.

When he ordered his shipment of the *Questions*, Rigaud was consolidating his position at the center of the local trade. His merger with Pons in 1770 provided him with enough capital and assets to ride out the mishaps—delayed shipments, defaulting debtors, liquidity crises—that often upset smaller businesses. Also, he played rough. When Cézary, one of the middling dealers, failed to meet some of his payments in 1781, Rigaud drove him out of business by organizing a cabal of his creditors. They refused to let him reschedule the payments, had him thrown in prison for debt, and forced him to sell off his stock at an auction, where they kept down the prices and gobbled up the books. By dispensing patronage, Rigaud controlled most of Montpellier's binderies; and by exerting pressure on the binders, he produced delays and snags in the affairs of the other booksellers. In 1789 only one of them remained, Abraham Fontanel, and he stayed solvent only by maintaining a *cabinet littéraire*, "which provokes terrible fits of jealousy by the sieur Rigaud, who wants to be the only one left and who shows his hatred of me every day,"[11] as Fontanel confided to the STN.

Rigaud did not eliminate his competitors simply by outdoing them in the dog-eat-dog style of commercial capitalism of early modern France. His letters, theirs, and the correspondence of many other booksellers show that the book trade contracted during the late 1770s and 1780s. In hard times, the big booksellers squeezed out the small, and the tough outlasted the tender. Rigaud had been a tough customer from the very beginning of his relations with the STN. He had ordered his copies of the *Questions* from Neuchâtel, where the STN was printing a pirated edition, rather than from Geneva, where Voltaire's regular printer, Gabriel Cramer, was producing the original, because he had extracted better terms. He also demanded better service, especially when the other booksellers in Montpellier, who had dealt with Cramer, received their copies first. The delay produced a volley of letters from Rigaud to the STN. Why couldn't the STN work faster? Didn't it know that it was making him lose customers to his competitors? He would have to order from Cramer in the future if it could not provide quicker shipments at a lower price. When volumes one through three finally arrived from Neuchâtel, volumes four through six from Geneva were already on sale in the other shops. Rigaud compared the texts, word for word, and found that the STN's edition contained none of the additional material that it had claimed to receive on the sly from Voltaire. So how could he push the theme of "additions and corrections" in his sales talk? The recriminations flew thick and fast in the mail between Montpellier and Neuchâtel, and they showed that Rigaud meant to exploit every inch of every advantage that he could gain on his competitors. More important, they also

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revealed that the *Questions* were being sold all over Montpellier, even though in principle they could not circulate legally in France. Far from being confined to the under-the-cloak trade of marginal characters like "the students' mother," Voltaire's work turned out to be a prize item in the scramble for profits at the very heart of the established book trade. When dealers like Rigaud scratched and clawed for their shipments of it, Voltaire could be sure that he was succeeding in his attempt to propel his ideas through the main lines of France's communications system.

3. The role of Voltaire and Cramer in the diffusion process raises the problem of how Rigaud's operation fit into the other stages in the life cycle of the *Questions*. Rigaud knew that he was not getting a first edition; the STN had sent a circular letter to him and its other main customers, explaining that it would reproduce Cramer's text, but with corrections and additions provided by the author himself, so that its version would be superior to the original. One of the STN's directors had visited Voltaire at Ferney in April 1770, and had returned with a promise that Voltaire would touch up the printed sheets he was to receive from Cramer and then would forward them to Neuchâtel for a pirated edition.[12] Voltaire often played such tricks. They provided a way to improve the quality and increase the quantity of his books, and therefore served his main purpose—which was not to make money, for he did not sell his prose to the printers, but to spread Enlightenment. The profit motive kept the rest of the system going, however. So when Cramer got wind of the STN's attempt to raid his market, he protested to Voltaire, Voltaire retracted his promise to the STN, and the STN had to settle for a delayed version of the text, which it received from Ferney, but with only minimal additions and corrections.[13] In fact, this setback did not hurt its sales, because the market had plenty of room to absorb editions, not only the STN's but also one that Marc Michel Rey produced in Amsterdam, and probably others as well. The booksellers had their choice of suppliers, and they chose according to whatever marginal advantage they could obtain on matters of price, quality, speed, and reliability in delivery. Rigaud dealt regularly with publishers in Paris, Lyon, Rouen, Avignon, and Geneva. He played them off against each other, and sometimes ordered the same book from two or three of them so as to be certain of getting it before his competitors did. By working several circuits at the same time, he increased his room for maneuver. But in the case of the *Questions*, he was outmaneuvered and had to receive his goods from the circuitous Voltaire-Cramer-Voltaire-STN route.

That route merely took the copy from the author to the printer. For the printed sheets to reach Rigaud in Montpellier from the STN's shop in Neuchâtel, they had to wind their way through one of the most complex stages in the book's circuit. They could follow two main routes. One led from Neuchâtel to Geneva, Turin, Nice (which was not yet French), and Marseilles. It had the advantage of skirting French territory—and therefore the danger of confiscation—but it involved huge detours and expenses. The books had to be lugged over the Alps and pass through a whole army of middlemen—shipping agents, bargemen, wagoners, entrepôt keepers, ship captains, and dockers—before they arrived in Rigaud's storeroom. The best Swiss shippers

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

claimed they could get a crate to Nice in a month for thirteen livres, eight sous per hundredweight; but their estimates proved to be far too low. The direct route from Neuchâtel to Lyon and down the Rhône was fast, cheap, and easy—but dangerous. The crates had to be sealed at their point of entry into France and inspected by the booksellers' guild and the royal book inspector in Lyon, then reshipped and inspected once more in Montpellier.[14]

Always cautious, Rigaud asked the STN to ship the first volumes of the *Questions* by the roundabout route, because he knew he could rely on his agent in Marseilles, Joseph Coulomb, to get the books into France without mishap. They left on December 9, 1771, but did not arrive until after March, when the first three volumes of Cramer's edition were already being sold by Rigaud's competitors. The second and third volumes arrived in July, but loaded down with shipping charges and damaged by rough handling. "It seems that we are five or six thousand leagues apart," Rigaud complained, adding that he regretted he had not given his business to Cramer, whose shipments had already reached volume six.[15] By this time, the STN was worried enough about losing customers throughout southern France to set up a smuggling operation in Lyon. Their man, a marginal bookdealer named Joseph-Louis Berthoud, got volumes four and five past the guild inspectors, but then his business collapsed in bankruptcy; and to make matters worse, the French government imposed a tax of sixty livres per hundredweight on all book imports. The STN fell back on the Alpine route, offering to get its shipments as far as Nice for fifteen livres per hundredweight if Rigaud would pay the rest of the expenses, including the import duty. But Rigaud considered the duty such a heavy blow to the international trade, that he suspended all his orders with foreign suppliers. The new tariff policy had made it prohibitively expensive to disguise illegal books as legal ones and to pass them through normal commercial channels.

In December, the STN's agent in Nice, Jacques Deandreis, somehow got a shipment of volume six of the *Questions* to Rigaud through the port of Sète, which was supposed to be closed to book imports. Then the French government, realizing that it had nearly destroyed the foreign book trade, lowered the tariff to twenty-six livres per hundredweight. Rigaud proposed sharing the cost with his foreign suppliers: he would pay one third if they would pay two thirds. This proposal suited the STN, but in the spring of 1772, Rigaud decided that the Nice route was too expensive to be used under any conditions. Having heard enough complaints from its other customers to reach the same conclusion, the STN dispatched one of its directors to Lyon, and he persuaded a more dependable Lyonnais dealer, J.-M. Barret, to clear its shipments through the local guild and forward them to its provincial clients. Thanks to this arrangement, the last three volumes of Rigaud's *Questions* arrived safely in the summer.

It had required continuous effort and considerable expense to get the entire order to Montpellier, and Rigaud and the STN did not stop realigning their supply routes once they had completed this transaction. Because economic and political pressures kept shifting, they had constantly to readjust their arrangements within the complex world of middlemen, who linked printing houses with bookshops, and often determined, in the last analysis, what literature reached French readers.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

How the readers assimilated their books cannot be determined. Bibliographical analysis of all the copies that can be located would show what varieties of the text were available. A study of notarial archives in Montpellier might indicate how many copies turned up in inheritances, and statistics drawn from auction catalogues might make it possible to estimate the number in substantial private libraries. But given the present state of documentation, one cannot know who Voltaire's readers were or how they responded to his text. Reading remains the most difficult stage to study in the circuit followed by books.

4. All stages were affected by the social, economic, political, and intellectual conditions of the time; but for Rigaud, these general influences made themselves felt within a local context. He sold books in a city of thirty-one thousand inhabitants. Despite an important textile industry, Montpellier was essentially an old-fashioned administrative and religious center, richly endowed with cultural institutions, including a university, an academy of sciences, twelve Masonic lodges, and sixteen monastic communities. And because it was a seat of the provincial estates of Languedoc and an intendancy, and had as well an array of courts, the city had a large population of lawyers and royal officials. If they resembled their counterparts in other provincial centers,[16] they probably provided Rigaud with a good many of his customers and probably had a taste for Enlightenment literature. He did not discuss their social background in his correspondence, but he noted that they clamored for the works of Voltaire, Rousseau, and Raynal. They subscribed heavily to the *Encyclopédie*, and even asked for atheistic treatises like *Système de la nature* and *Philosophie de la nature*. Montpellier was no intellectual backwater, and it was good book territory. "The book trade is quite extensive in this town," an observer remarked in 1768. "The booksellers have kept their shops well stocked ever since the inhabitants developed a taste for having libraries."[17]

These favorable conditions prevailed when Rigaud ordered his *Questions*. But hard times set in during the early 1770s; and in the 1780s, Rigaud, like most booksellers, complained of a severe decline in his trade. The whole French economy contracted during those years, according to the standard account of C. E. Labrousse.[18] Certainly, the state's finances went into a tailspin: hence the disastrous book tariff of 1771, which belonged to Terray's unsuccessful attempt to reduce the deficit accumulated during the Seven Years' War. The government also tried to stamp out pirated and forbidden books, first by more severe police work in 1771-74, then by a general reform of the book trade in 1777. These measures eventually ruined Rigaud's commerce with the STN and with the other publishing houses that had grown up around France's borders during the prosperous mid-century years. The foreign publishers produced both original editions of books that could not pass the censorship in Paris and pirated editions of books put out by the Parisian publishers. Because the Parisians had acquired a virtual monopoly over the legal publishing industry, their rivals in the provinces formed alliances with the foreign houses and looked the other way when shipments from abroad arrived for inspection in the provincial guild halls *(chambres syndicales)*. Under Louis XIV, the government had used the Parisian guild as an instrument to suppress the illegal trade; but under Louis XV, it became increasingly lax, until a new era of severity began with the fall of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Choiseul's ministry (December 1770). Thus Rigaud's relations with the STN fit perfectly into an economic and political pattern that had prevailed in the book trade since the early eighteenth century and that began to fall apart just as the first crates of the *Questions* were making their way between Neuchâtel and Montpellier.

Other patterns might show up in other research, for the model need not be applied in this manner, nor need it be applied at all. I am not arguing that book history should be written according to a standard formula, but trying to show how its disparate segments can be brought together within a single conceptual scheme. Different book historians might prefer different schemata. They might concentrate on the book trade of all Languedoc, as Madeleine Ventre has done; or on the general bibliography of Voltaire, as Giles Barber, Jeroom Vercruysse, and others are doing; or on the overall pattern of book production in eighteenth century France, in the manner of François Furet and Robert Estivals.[19] But however they define their subject, they will not draw out its full significance unless they relate it to all the elements that worked together as a circuit for transmitting texts. To make the point clearer, I will go over the model circuit once more, noting questions that have been investigated successfully or that seem ripe for further research.

1. *Authors.* Despite the proliferation of biographies of great writers, the basic conditions of authorship remain obscure for most periods of history. At what point did writers free themselves from the patronage of wealthy noblemen and the state in order to live by their pens? What was the nature of a literary career, and how was it pursued? How did writers deal with publishers, printers, booksellers, reviewers, and one another? Until those questions are answered, we will not have a full understanding of the transmission of texts. Voltaire was able to manipulate secret alliances with pirate publishers because he did not depend on writing for a living. A century later, Zola proclaimed that a writer's independence came from selling his prose to the highest bidder.[20] How did this transformation take place? The work of John Lough begins to provide an answer, but more systematic research on the evolution of the republic of letters in France could be done from police records, literary almanacs, and bibliographies (*La France littéraire* gives the names and publications of 1,187 writers in 1757 and 3,089 in 1784). The situation in Germany is more obscure, owing to the fragmentation of the German states before 1871. But German scholars are beginning to tap sources like *Das gelehrte Teutschland*, which lists four thousand writers in 1779, and to trace the links between authors, publishers, and readers in regional and monographic studies.[21] Marino Berengo has shown how much can be discovered about author-publisher relations in Italy.[22] And the work of A. S. Collins still provides an excellent account of authorship in England, although it needs to be brought up to date and extended beyond the eighteenth century.[23]

2. *Publishers.* The key role of publishers is now becoming clearer, thanks to articles appearing in the *Journal of Publishing History* and monographs like Martin Lowry's *The World of Aldus Manutius*, Robert Patten's *Charles Dickens and His Publishers*, and Gary Stark's *Entrepreneurs of Ideology: Neoconservative*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Publishers in Germany, 1890-1933. But the evolution of the publisher as a distinct figure in contrast to the master bookseller and the printer still needs systematic study. Historians have barely begun to tap the papers of publishers, although they are the richest of all sources for the history of books. The archives of the Cotta Verlag in Marbach, for example, contain at least one hundred fifty thousand documents, yet they have only been skimmed for references to Goethe, Schiller, and other famous writers. Further investigation almost certainly would turn up a great deal of information about the book as a force in nineteenth century Germany. How did publishers draw up contracts with authors, build alliances with booksellers, negotiate with political authorities, and handle finances, supplies, shipments, and publicity? The answers to those questions would carry the history of books deep into the territory of social, economic, and political history, to their mutual benefit.

The Project for Historical Biobibliography at Newcastle upon Tyne and the Institut de Littérature et de Techniques Artistiques de Masse at Bordeaux illustrate the directions that such interdisciplinary work has already taken. The Bordeaux group has tried to trace books through different distribution systems in order to uncover the literary experience of different groups in contemporary France.[24] The researchers in Newcastle have studied the diffusion process through quantitative analysis of subscription lists, which were widely used in the sales campaigns of British publishers from the early seventeenth to the early nineteenth centuries.[25] Similar work could be done on publishers' catalogues and prospectuses, which have been collected in research centers like the Newberry Library. The whole subject of book advertising needs investigation. One could learn a great deal about attitudes toward books and the context of their use by studying the way they were presented—the strategy of the appeal, the values invoked by the phrasing—in all kinds of publicity, from journal notices to wall posters. American historians have used newspaper advertisements to map the spread of the printed word into the back reaches of colonial society.[26] By consulting the papers of publishers, they could make deeper inroads in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[27] Unfortunately, however, publishers usually treat their archives as garbage. Although they save the occasional letter from a famous author, they throw away account books and commercial correspondence, which usually are the most important sources of information for the book historian. The Center for the Book in the Library of Congress is now compiling a guide to publishers' archives. If they can be preserved and studied, they might provide a different perspective on the whole course of American history.

3. *Printers*. The printing shop is far better known than the other stages in the production and diffusion of books, because it has been a favorite subject of study in the field of analytical bibliography, whose purpose, as defined by R. B. McKerrow and Philip Gaskell, is "to elucidate the transmission of texts by explaining the processes of book production."[28] Bibliographers have made important contributions to textual criticism, especially in Shakespearean scholarship, by building inferences backward from the structure of a book to the process of its printing and hence to an original text, such as the missing Shakespeare manuscripts. That line of reasoning has been undercut

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

recently by D. F. McKenzie.[29] But even if they can never reconstruct an Ur-Shakespeare, bibliographers can demonstrate the existence of different editions of a text and of different states of an edition, a necessary skill in diffusion studies. Their techniques also make it possible to decipher the records of printers and so have opened up a new, archival phase in the history of printing. Thanks to the work of McKenzie, Leon Voet, Raymond de Roover, and Jacques Rychner, we now have a clear picture of how printing shops operated throughout the handpress period (roughly 1500-1800).[30] More work needs to be done on later periods, and new questions could be asked: How did printers calculate costs and organize production, especially after the spread of job printing and journalism? How did book budgets change after the introduction of machine-made paper in the first decade of the nineteenth century and Linotype in the 1880s? How did the technological changes affect the management of labor? And what part did journeymen printers, an unusually articulate and militant sector of the working class, play in labor history? Analytical bibliography may seem arcane to the outsider, but it could make a great contribution to social as well as literary history, especially if it were seasoned with a reading of printers' manuals and autobiographies, beginning with those of Thomas Platter, Thomas Gent, N. E. Restif de la Bretonne, Benjamin Franklin, and Charles Manby Smith.

4. *Shippers.* Little is known about the way books reached bookstores from printing shops. The wagon, the canal barge, the merchant vessel, the post office, and the railroad may have influenced the history of literature more than one would suspect. Although transport facilities probably had little effect on the trade in great publishing centers like London and Paris, they sometimes determined the ebb and flow of business in remote areas. Before the nineteenth century, books were usually sent in sheets, so that the customer could have them bound according to his taste and his ability to pay. They traveled in large bales wrapped in heavy paper, and were easily damaged by rain and the friction of ropes. Compared with commodities like textiles, their intrinsic value was slight, yet their shipping costs were high, owing to the size and weight of the sheets. So shipping often took up a large proportion of a book's total cost and a large place in the marketing strategy of publishers. In many parts of Europe, printers could not count on getting shipments to booksellers in August and September, because wagoners abandoned their routes to work the harvests. The Baltic trade frequently ground to a halt after October, because ice closed the ports. Routes opened and shut everywhere in response to the pressures of war, politics, and even insurance rates. Unorthodox literature has traveled underground in huge quantities from the sixteenth century to the present, so its influence has varied according to the effectiveness of the smuggling industry. And other genres, like chapbooks and penny dreadfuls, circulated through special distribution systems, which need much more study, although book historians are now beginning to clear some of the ground.[31]

5. *Booksellers.* Thanks to some classic studies—H. S. Bennett on early modern England, L. C. Wroth on colonial America, H.-J. Martin on seventeenth century France, and Johann Goldfriedrich on Germany—it is

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possible to piece together a general picture of the evolution of the book trade.[32] But more work needs to be done on the bookseller as a cultural agent, the middleman who mediated between supply and demand at their key point of contact. We still do not know enough about the social and intellectual world of men like Rigaud, about their values and tastes and the way they fit into their communities. They also operated within commercial networks, which expanded and collapsed like alliances in the diplomatic world. What laws governed the rise and fall of trade empires in publishing? A comparison of national histories could reveal some general tendencies, such as the centripetal force of great centers like London, Paris, Frankfurt, and Leipzig, which drew provincial houses into their orbits, and the countervailing trend toward alignments between provincial dealers and suppliers in independent enclaves like Liège, Bouillon, Neuchâtel, Geneva, and Avignon. But comparisons are difficult, because the trade operated through different institutions in different countries, which generated different kinds of archives. The records of the London Stationers' company, the Communauté des libraires et imprimeurs de Paris, and the Leipzig and Frankfurt book fairs have had a great deal to do with the different courses that book history has taken in England, France, and Germany.[33]

Nevertheless, books were sold as commodities everywhere. A more unabashedly economic study of them would provide a new perspective to the history of literature. James Barnes, John Tebbel, and Frédéric Barbier have demonstrated the importance of the economic element in the book trades of nineteenth century England, America, and France.[34] But more work could be done—on credit mechanisms, for example, and the techniques of negotiating bills of exchange, of defense against suspensions of payment, and of exchanging printed sheets in lieu of payment in specie. The book trade, like other businesses during the Renaissance and early modern periods, was largely a confidence game, but we still do not know how it was played.

6. *Readers.* Despite a considerable literature on its psychology, phenomenology, textology, and sociology, reading remains mysterious. How do readers make sense of the signs on the printed page? What are the social effects of that experience? And how has it varied? Literary scholars like Wayne Booth, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Walter Ong, and Jonathan Culler have made reading a central concern of textual criticism, because they understand literature as an activity, the construal of meaning within a system of communication, rather than a canon of texts.[35] The book historian could make use of their notions of fictitious audiences, implicit readers, and interpretive communities. But he may find their observations somewhat time-bound. Although the critics know their way around literary history (they are especially strong on seventeenth century England), they seem to assume that texts have always worked on the sensibilities of readers in the same way. But a seventeenth century London burgher inhabited a different mental universe from that of a twentieth century American professor. Reading itself has changed over time. It was often done aloud and in groups, or in secret and with an intensity we may not be able to imagine today. Carlo Ginsburg has shown how much meaning a sixteenth century miller could infuse into a text, and Margaret Spufford has demonstrated

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

that still humbler workmen fought their way to mastery over the printed word in the era of *Areopagitica*.[36] Everywhere in early modern Europe, from the ranks of Montaigne to those of Menocchio, readers wrung significance from books; they did not merely decipher them. Reading was a passion long before the "*Lesewut*" and the "*Wertherfieber*" of the romantic era; and there is *Strum und Drang* in it yet, despite the vogue for speed-reading and the mechanistic view of literature as the encoding and decoding of messages.

But texts shape the response of readers, however active they may be. As Walter Ong has observed, the opening pages of *The Canterbury Tales* and *A Farewell to Arms* create a frame and cast the reader in a role, which he cannot avoid no matter what he thinks of pilgrimages and civil wars.[37] In fact, typography as well as style and syntax determine the ways in which texts convey meanings. McKenzie has shown that the bawdy, unruly Congreve of the early quarto editions settled down into the decorous neoclassicist of the *Works* of 1709 as a consequence of book design rather than bowdlerization.[38] The history of reading will have to take account of the ways that texts constrain readers as well as the ways that readers take liberties with texts. The tension between those tendencies has existed wherever men confronted books, and it had produced some extraordinary results, as in Luther's reading of the Psalms, Rousseau's reading of *Le Misanthrope*, and Kierkegaard's reading of the sacrifice of Isaac.

If it is possible to recapture the great rereadings of the past, the inner experience of ordinary readers may always elude us. But we should at least be able to reconstruct a good deal of the social context of reading. The debate about silent reading during the Middle Ages has produced some impressive evidence about reading habits,[39] and studies of reading societies in Germany, where they proliferated to an extraordinary degree in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, have shown the importance of reading in the development of a distinct bourgeois cultural style.[40] German scholars have also done a great deal in the history of libraries and in reception studies of all kinds.[41] Following a notion of Rolf Engelsing, they often maintain that reading habits became transformed at the end of the eighteenth century. Before this "*Leserevolution*," readers tended to work laboriously through a small number of texts, especially the Bible, over and over again. Afterwards, they raced through all kinds of material, seeking amusement rather than edification. The shift from intensive to extensive reading coincided with a desacralization of the printed word. The world began to be cluttered with reading matter, and texts began to be treated as commodities that could be discarded as casually as yesterday's newspaper. This interpretation has recently been disputed by Reinhart Siegert, Martin Welke, and other younger scholars, who have discovered "intensive" reading in the reception of fugitive works like almanacs and newspapers, notably the *Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein* of Rudolph Zacharias Becker, an extraordinary best seller of the *Goethezeit*.[42] But whether or not the concept of a reading revolution will hold up, it has helped to align research on reading with general questions of social and cultural history.[43] The same can be said of research on literacy,[44] which has made it possible for scholars to detect the vague outline of diverse reading publics two and three centuries ago and to trace books to readers at several levels of society. The lower the level, the more intense the study. Popular literature

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

has been a favorite topic of research during the last decade,[45] despite a growing tendency to question the notion that cheap booklets like the *bibliothèque bleue* represented an autonomous culture of the common people or that one can distinguish clearly between strains of "elite" and "popular" culture. It now seems inadequate to view cultural change as a linear, or trickle-down, movement of influences. Currents flowed up as well as down, merging and blending as they went. Characters like Gargantua, Cinderella, and Buscon moved back and forth through oral traditions, chapbooks, and sophisticated literature, changing in nationality as well as genre.[46] One could even trace the metamorphoses of stock figures in almanacs. What does Poor Richard's reincarnation as *le Bonhomme Richard* reveal about literary culture in America and France? And what can be learned about German-French relations by following the Lame Messenger *(der hinkende Bote, le messager boiteux)* through the traffic of almanacs across the Rhine?

Questions about who reads what, in what conditions, at what time, and with what effect, link reading studies with sociology. The book historian could learn how to pursue such questions from the work of Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson, Paul Lazarsfeld, and Pierre Bourdieu. He could draw on the reading research that flourished in the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago from 1930 to 1950, and that still turns up in the occasional Gallup report.[47] And as an example of the sociological strain in historical writing, he could consult the studies of reading (and nonreading) in the English working class during the last two centuries by Richard Altick, Robert Webb, and Richard Hoggart.[48] All this work opens onto the larger problem of how exposure to the printed word affects the way men think. Did the invention of movable type transform man's mental universe? There may be no single satisfactory answer to that question, because it bears on so many different aspects of life in early modern Europe, as Elizabeth Eisenstein has shown.[49] But it should be possible to arrive at a firmer understanding of what books meant to people. Their use in the taking of oaths, the exchanging of gifts, the awarding of prizes, and the bestowing of legacies would provide clues to their significance within different societies. The iconography of books could indicate the weight of their authority, even for illiterate laborers who sat in church before pictures of the tablets of Moses. The place of books in folklore, and of folk motifs in books, shows that influences ran both ways when oral traditions came into contact with printed texts, and that books need to be studied in relation to other media.[50] The lines of research could lead in many directions, but they all should issue ultimately in a larger understanding of how printing has shaped man's attempts to make sense of the human condition.

One can easily lose sight of the larger dimensions of the enterprise, because book historians often stray into esoteric byways and unconnected specializations. Their work can be so fragmented, even within the limits of the literature on a single country, that it may seem hopeless to conceive of book history as a single subject, to be studied from a comparative perspective across the whole range of historical disciplines. But books themselves do not respect limits, either linguistic or national. They have often been written by authors who belonged to an international republic of letters, composed by printers who

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

did not work in their native tongue, sold by booksellers who operated across national boundaries, and read in one language by readers who spoke another. Books also refuse to be contained within the confines of a single discipline when treated as objects of study. Neither history nor literature nor economics nor sociology nor bibliography can do justice to all the aspects of the life of a book. By its very nature, therefore, the history of books must be international in scale and interdisciplinary in method. But it need not lack conceptual coherence, because books belong to circuits of communication that operate in consistent patterns, however complex they may be. By unearthing those circuits, historians can show that books do not merely recount history; they make it.

REFERENCES

[1]For examples of this work, see, in addition to the books named in the essay, Henri-Jean Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société à Paris au XVIIe siècle (1598-1701)* (Geneva: 1969), 2 volumes; Jean Quéniart, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie à Rouen au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris:1969); René Moulinas, *L'Imprimerie, la librairie et la presse à Avignon au XVIIIe siècle* (Grenoble: 1974); and Frédéric Barbier, *Trois cents ans de librairie et d'imprimerie: Berger-Levrault, 1676-1830* (Geneva: 1979), in the series "Histoire et civilisation du livre," which includes several monographs written along similar lines. Much of the French work has appeared as articles in the *Revue française d'histoire du livre*. For a survey of the field by two of the most important contributors to it, see Roger Chartier and Daniel Roche, "Le livre, un changement de perspective," *Faire de l'histoire* (Paris: 1974), 3, pp. 115-36, and Chartier and Roche, "L'Histoire quantitative du livre," *Revue française d'histoire du livre* 16 (1977): 3-27. For sympathetic assessments by two American fellow travelers, see Robert Darnton, "Reading, Writing, and Publishing in Eighteenth-Century France: A Case Study in the Sociology of Literature," *Daedalus*, Winter 1971, pp. 214-56, and Raymond Birn, *"Livre et société* after ten years: formation of a discipline," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 151, (1976): 287-312.

[2]As examples of these approaches, see Theodore Besterman, *Voltaire* (New York: 1969), pp. 433-34; Daniel Mornet, "Les enseignements des bibliothèques privées (1750-1780)," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France 17* (1910): pp. 449-92; and the bibliographical studies now being prepared under the direction of the Voltaire Foundation, which will replace the outdated bibliography by Georges Bengesco.

[3]The following account is based on the ninety-nine letters in Rigaud's dossier in the papers of the Société typographique de Neuchâtel, Bibliothèque de la ville de Neuchâtel, Switzerland (henceforth referred to as STN), supplemented by other relevant material from the vast archives of the STN.

[4]Rigaud to STN, July 27, 1771.

[5]The pattern of Rigaud's orders is evident from his letters to the STN and the STN's "Livres de Commission," where it tabulated its orders. Rigaud included catalogues of his major holdings in his letters of June 29, 1774, and May 23, 1777.

[6]Madeleine Ventre, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie en Languedoc au dernier siècle de l'Ancien Régime* (Paris and The Hague: 1958), p. 227.

[7]B. André to STN, August 22, 1784.

[8]*Manuel de l'auteur et du libraire* (Paris: 1777), p. 67.

[9]Jean-François Favarger to STN, August 29, 1778.

[10]The *procès-verbal* of the raids is in the Bibliothèque Nationale, Ms. français 22075, fo. 355.

[11]Fontanel to STN, March 6, 1781.

[12]STN to Gosse and Pinet, booksellers of The Hague, April 19, 1770.

[13]STN to Voltaire, September 15, 1770.

[14]This account is based on the STN's correspondence with intermediaries all along its routes, notably the shipping agents Nicole and Galliard of Nyon and Secrétan and De la Serve of Ouchy.

[15]Rigaud to STN, August 28, 1771.

[16]Robert Darnton, *The Business of Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie 1775-1800* (Cambridge, Mass.: 1979), pp. 273-99.

[17]Anonymous, "Etat et description de la ville de Montpellier, fait en 1768," in *Montpellier en 1768 et en 1836 d'après deux manuscrits inédits*, edited by J. Berthelé (Montpellier: 1909), p. 55. This rich contemporary description of Montpellier is the main source of the above account.

[18]C. E. Labrousse, *La crise de l'économie française à la fin de l'Ancien Régime et au début de la Révolution* (Paris: 1944).

[19]Ventre, *L'Imprimerie et la librairie en Languedoc;* François Furet, "La 'librairie' du royaume de France au 18e siècle," *Livre et société*, 1, pp. 3-32; and Robert Estivals, *La statistique bibliographique de*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

la France sous la monarchie au XVIIIe siècle (Paris and The Hague: 1965). The bibliographical work will be published under the auspices of the Voltaire Foundation.

[20]John Lough, *Writer and Public in France from the Middle Ages to the Present Day* (Oxford: 1978), p. 303.

[21]For surveys and selections of recent German research, see Helmuth Kiesel and Paul Münch, *Gesellschaft und Literatur im 18. Jahrhundert. Voraussetzung und Entstehung des literarischen Marktes in Deutschland* (Munich: 1977); *Aufklärung, Absolutismus und Bürgertum in Deutschland*, edited by Franklin Kopitzsch (Munich: 1976); and Herbert G. Göpfert, *Vom Autor zum Leser* (Munich: 1978).

[22]Marino Berengo, *Intellettuali e librai nella Milano della Restaurazione* (Turin: 1980). On the whole, however, the French version of *histoire du livre* has received a less enthusiastic reception in Italy than in Germany: see Furio Diaz, "Metodo quantitativo e storia delle idee," *Rivista storica italiana* 78 (1966): 932-47.

[23]A. S. Collins, *Authorship in the Days of Johnson* (London: 1927) and *The Profession of Letters (1780-1832)* (London: 1928). For more recent work, see John Feather, "John Nourse and His Authors," *Studies in Bibliography* 34 (1981): 205-26.

[24]Robert Escarpit, *Le littéraire et le social. Eléments pour une sociologie de la littérature* (Paris: 1970).

[25]Peter John Wallis, *The Social Index. A New Technique for Measuring Social Trends* (Newcastle upon Tyne: 1978).

[26]William Gilmore is now completing an extensive research project on the diffusion of books in colonial New England. On the political and economic aspects of the colonial press, see Stephen Botein, " 'Meer Mechanics' and an Open Press: The Business and Political Strategies of Colonial American Printers," *Perspectives in American History* 9 (1975): 127-225; and *The Press and the American Revolution*, edited by Bernard Bailyn and John B. Hench (Worcester, Massachusetts: 1980), which contain ample references to work on the early history of the book in America.

[27]For a general survey of work on the later history of books in this country, see Hellmut Lehmann-Haupt, *The Book in America* (New York: revised edition, 1952).

[28]Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York and Oxford: 1972), preface. Gaskell's work provides an excellent general survey of the subject.

[29]D. F. McKenzie, "Printers of the Mind: Some Notes on Bibliographical Theories and Printing House Practices," *Studies in Bibliography* 22 (1969): 1-75.

[30]D. F. McKenzie, *The Cambridge University Press 1696-1712* (Cambridge: 1966), 2 volumes; Leon Voet, *The Golden Compasses* (Amsterdam: 1969 and 1972), 2 volumes; Raymond de Roover, "The Business Organization of the Plantin Press in the Setting of Sixteenth-Century Antwerp," *De gulden passer* 24 (1956): 104-20; and Jacques Rychner, "A l'ombre des Lumières: coup d'oeil sur la main-d'oeuvre de quelques imprimeries du XVIIIe siècle," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century*, 155 (1976): 1925-55 and "Running a Printing House in Eighteenth-Century Switzerland: the Workshop of the Société typographique de Neuchâtel," *The Library*, sixth series, 1 (1979): 1-24.

[31]For example, see J.-P. Belin, *Le commerce des livres prohibés à Paris de 1750 à 1789* (Paris: 1913); Jean-Jacques Darmon, *Le colportage de librairie en France sous le second empire* (Paris: 1972); and Reinhart Siegert, *Aufklärung und Volkslektüre exemplarisch dargestellt an Rudolph Zacharias Becker und seinem 'Noth- und Hülfsbüchlein' mit einer Bibliographie zum Gesamtthema* (Frankfurt am Main: 1978).

[32]H. S. Bennett, *English Books & Readers 1475 to 1557* (Cambridge: 1952) and *English Books & Readers 1558-1603* (Cambridge: 1965); L. C. Wroth, *The Colonial Printer* (Portland: 1938); H.-J. Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société;* and Johann Goldfriedrich and Friedrich Kapp, *Geschichte des Deutschen Buchhandels* (Leipzig: 1886-1913), 4 volumes.

[33]Compare Cyprian Blagden, *The Stationers' Company, A History, 1403-1959* (Cambridge: 1960); Martin, *Livre, pouvoirs et société;* and Rudolf Jentzsch, *Der deutsch-lateinische Büchermarkt nach den Leipziger Ostermesskatalogen von 1740, 1770 und 1800 in seiner Gliederung und Wandlung* (Leipzig: 1912).

[34]James Barnes, *Free Trade in Books: A Study of the London Book Trade Since 1800* (Oxford: 1964); John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States* (New York: 1972-78), 3 volumes; and Frédéric Barbier, *Trois cents ans de librairie et d'imprimerie.*

[35]See, for example, Wolfgang Iser, *The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore: 1974); Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts: The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1972) and *Is There a Text in This Class? The Authority of Interpretive Communities* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: 1980); Walter Ong, "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction," *PMLA (Publication of the Modern Language Association of America)* 90 (1975): 9-21; and for a sampling of other variations on these themes, Susan R. Suleiman and Inge Crosman, *The Reader in the Text: Essays on Audience and Interpretation* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1980).

[36]Carlo Ginzburg, *The Cheese and the Worms. The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980); Margaret Spufford, "First steps in literacy: the reading and writing experiences of the humblest seventeenth-century spiritual autobiographers," *Social History*, 407-35.

[37]Ong, "The Writer's Audience Is Always a Fiction."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[38]D. F. McKenzie, "Typography and Meaning: The Case of William Congreve," *Wolfenbütteler Schriften zur Geschichte des Buchwesens*, volume 4 (Hamburg: Dr. Ernst Hauswedell & Co., 1981), pp. 81-125.

[39]See Paul Saenger, "Silent Reading: Its Impact on Late Medieval Script and Society," forthcoming in *Viator*.

[40]See *Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation. Ein europäischer Vergleich*, edited by Otto Dann (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1981), which has a thorough bibliography.

[41]For examples of recent work, see *Öffentliche und Private Bibliotheken im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Raritätenkammern, Forschungsinstrumente oder Bildungsstätten?* edited by Paul Raabe (Bremen and Wolfenbüttel, 1977). Much of the stimulus for recent reception studies has come from the theoretical work of Hans Robert Jauss, notably *Literaturgeschichte als Provokation* (Frankfurt am Main: 1970).

[42]Engelsing, *Analphabetentum und Lektüre. Zur Sozialgeschichte des Lesens in Deutschland zwischen feudaler und industrieller Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: 1973) and *Der Bürger als Leser. Lesergeschichte in Deutschland 1500-1800* (Stuttgart: 1974); Reinhart Siegert, *Aufklärung und Volkslektüre;* and Martin Welke, "Gemeinsame Lektüre und frühe Formen von Gruppenbildungen im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert: Zeitungslesen in Deutschland," in *Lesegesellschaften und bürgerliche Emanzipation*, pp. 29-53.

[43]As an example of this alignment, see Rudolf Schenda, *Volk ohne Buch* (Frankfurt am Main: 1970), and for examples of more recent work, *Leser und Lesen im Achtzehntes Jahrhundert*, edited by Rainer Gruenter (Heidelberg: 1977) and *Lesen und Leben*, edited by Herbert G. Göpfert (Frankfurt am Main: 1975).

[44]See François Furet and Jacques Ozouf, *Lire et écrire: l'alphabétisation des Français de Calvin à Jules Ferry* (Paris: 1978); Lawrence Stone, "Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900," *Past and Present* 42 (1969): 69-139; David Cressy, *Literacy and the Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge: 1980); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *Literacy in Colonial New England* (New York: 1974); and Carlo Cipolla, *Literacy and Development in the West* (Harmondsworth: 1969).

[45]For a survey and a synthesis of this research, see Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (New York: 1978).

[46]As an example of the older view in which the *bibliothèque bleue* serves as a key to the understanding of popular culture, see Robert Mandrou, *De la culture populaire aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles. La Bibliothèque bleue de Troyes* (Paris: 1964). For a more nuanced and up-to-date view, see Roger Chartier, *Figures de la gueuserie* (Paris: 1982).

[47]Douglas Waples, Bernard Berelson, Franklyn Bradshaw, *What Reading Does to People* (Chicago: 1940); Bernard Berelson, *The Library's Public* (New York: 1949); Elihu Katz, "Communication Research and the Image of Society: The Convergence of Two Traditions," *American Journal of Sociology* 65 (1960): 435-40; and *Reading in America 1978*, edited by John Y. Cole and Carol S. Gold (Washington, D.C.: 1979). For the Gallup report, see the volume published by the American Library Association, *Book Reading and Library Usage: A Study of Habits and Perceptions* (Chicago: 1978). Much in this older variety of sociology still seems valid, and it can be studied in conjunction with the current work of Pierre Bourdieu; see especially his *La distinction. Critique sociale du jugement* (Paris: 1979).

[48]Richard D. Altick, *The English Common Reader: A Social History of the Mass Reading Public 1800-1900* (Chicago: 1957); Robert K. Webb, *The British Working Class Reader* (London: 1955); and Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy* (Harmondsworth: 1960; 1st edition, 1957).

[49]Elisabeth L. Eisenstein, *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* (Cambridge: 1979), 2 volumes. For a discussion of Eisenstein's thesis, see Anthony T. Grafton, "The Importance of Being Printed," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 11 (1980): 265-86; Michael Hunter, "The Impact of Print," *The Book Collector* 28 (1979): 335-52; and Roger Chartier, "L'Ancien Régime typographique: Réflexions sur quelques travaux récents," *Annales. Économies, sociétés, civilisations*, 36 (1981): 191-209.

[50]Some of these general themes are taken up in Eric Havelock, *Origins of Western Literacy* (Toronto: 1976); *Literacy in Traditional Societies*, edited by Jack Goody (Cambridge: 1968); Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: 1977); Walter Ong, *The Presence of the Word* (New York: 1970); and Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1975).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JAROSLAV PELIKAN

The Two Cities: The Decline and Fall of Rome as Historical Paradigm

"WE ARE REMINDED OF ANCIENT ROME"—so wrote Karl Marx in *Das Kapital*. He was speaking not only for himself, but for entire generations of thoughtful and critical observers as well, who, when confronted by a contemporary crisis, have drawn upon the history of Rome, and particularly the history of its decline and fall, as a paradigm—Adam Smith in *The Wealth of Nations;* Edmund Burke, in *Reflections on the Revolution in France;* the Founding Fathers of this Republic, in several issues of *The Federalist;* and above all, Edward Gibbon, in his account of "the triumph of barbarism and religion."[1]

In being "reminded of ancient Rome," these eighteenth century thinkers, along with Marx and other later interpreters, were continuing a tradition of reflection on the decline and fall of Rome. The tradition began with those who were contemporary to the events. This essay, which continues and develops some ideas originally set down on the occasion of the bicentennial both of the Republic and of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall*,[2] is an analysis of three sets of reactions by the church fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries to the events of their times. Each of them represented an alternative way of coming to terms with the end of "Old Rome," a distinct way of relating it to the rise of a "new city," and thus a special interpretation of the nature and purpose of the historical process. Because the decline and fall of Rome has continued to serve as the historical paradigm for an understanding of how civilizations end, and because these three interpretations of it, albeit in a new and secular guise, still dominate so much of the philosophy of history, these three versions of the "tale of two cities" may serve also as an exercise in understanding the roots of our own ideas.

I

Probably the most evident response of Latin Christian writers to the events associated with the decline and fall of Rome was a resurgence of Christian apocalypticism, though in a chastened form. The spokesman for this chastened apocalypticism was Jerome. His words are no less eloquent and poignant for their being quite familiar.[3] "For days and nights," Jerome wrote in his *Commentary on Ezekiel*,

> I could think of nothing but the universal safety. When my friends were captured, I could only imagine myself a captive, too. . . . When the brightest light of the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> world was extinguished, when the very head of the Roman empire was severed, the entire world perished in a single city *[in una urbe totus orbis interiit]*. . . . Who could believe that after being raised up by victories over the whole world Rome should come crashing down, and become at once the mother and the grave of her peoples?

In a later description of the time when he wrote these words, Jerome said in a letter:

> When I began to dictate [the *Commentary on Ezekiel*], I was so confounded by the havoc wrought in the West and above all by the sack of Rome [at the hands of Alaric in 410] that, as the common saying has it, I forgot even my own name. Long did I remain silent, knowing that it was a time to weep.

And again in the next letter: "My voice sticks in my throat; and, as I dictate, sobs choke my utterance. The City which had taken the whole world was itself taken." He recalled not only the prophecies of Scripture, but the Virgilian hexameter about the fall of Troy (*Aeneid* 2,363): "Stoops to her fall our ancient city, she the empress of the ages."

In these sentiments at the sack of Rome, Jerome was speaking in the accents of apocalypse. The events just before the sack, including Alaric's deal with the "semibarbarian" Stilicho, prompted Jerome to turn to the mythical figure of "the man of sin, the son of perdition" in 2 Thessalonians. According to that epistle, "he who is now holding it back *[qui tenet nunc]*" would begin to lose his hold, making it possible for the man of sin to appear. "He who is holding it back is removed," Jerome wrote in 409, "and yet we do not realize that Antichrist is near. Yes, Antichrist is near, whom the Lord Jesus Christ 'will kill with the spirit of his mouth [and destroy with the brilliance of his advent].' " "He who is now holding it back" was Old Rome, whose continuance was all that stood between mankind and the end of the world. The first important theologian of the Latin West, Tertullian, had declared in his *Apology* that "a mighty shock impending over the whole world—in fact, the very end of all things, threatening dreadful woes—is retarded only by the continued existence of the Roman empire," and in a later chapter of the same work, he made the striking assertion: "We pray for the delay of the end." That identification of Old Rome as destined to stand as long as the earth became the common property of Christians in the first four centuries.

It meant, however, that the awesome events associated with the sack of Old Rome in 410 could not evoke from a Jerome the simple recitation of the almost gleeful cry of the Apocalypse of Saint John—"Fallen is Babylon, Babylon, the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth." For one thing, the Rome that was now under siege and threat was in some sense a Christian city—not, therefore, the Old Rome, but a "New Rome." It is significant that in many of the passages just quoted, Jerome was speaking about fellow believers caught in the catastrophe of the city, notably a remarkable and heroic woman, Marcella, whose life and death he described in his Epistle 127. But the restraint on a simplistic apocalypticism had another source as well, one that was no less profound. Not only was Rome a Christian city, but Jerome was a Roman—not indeed by birth, since he came from Dalmatia, but by the deeper ties of language and cultural loyalty. The famous dream brought on by fever, upbraiding him for being a Ciceronian rather than a Christian—as a conse-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

quence of which he swore never to own secular books again—must not be taken to mean that he cut himself off from his classical heritage. Despite this renunciation, the fall of Cicero's city to the barbarian Goths was for him, no less than for his pagan contemporaries in the Empire, a tragedy of major proportions. For, as he had said already in 393, in an allocution to New Rome, the city had "with the confession of Christ blotted out the blasphemy written on [her] forehead," and had thereby become a "mighty city, mistress-city of the world *[urbs potens, urbs orbis domina]*" again. "By repentance," he proclaimed to Rome, "you may escape the curse with which the Savior threatened you in the Apocalypse."

II

But the chastened apocalypticism that characterized Jerome's interpretation of the events of 410 was not the only contemporary Christian reaction to the relation of Old Rome and New Rome in the fourth and fifth centuries. A considerably more dispassionate, almost (though not quite) matter-of-fact tone is audible in the accounts of these events by Eastern historians, notably Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen.[4] Both these historians included in their accounts a paragraph on Alaric's sack of Old Rome, when, as Socrates put it, the barbarians had "burned the greatest number of magnificent structures and other admirable works of art," and drew from it the appropriate moral lesson. "All persons of good sense," Sozomen wrote, "were aware that the calamities which this siege brought upon the Romans were indications of divine wrath sent to chastise them for their luxury, their debauchery, and their manifold acts of injustice toward one another as well as toward strangers." As they stand, these words seem to be little more than a parallel to the attacks on pagan Roman immorality that we find in Western writers from Tertullian to Augustine and Orosius and beyond.

Yet in Sozomen's narrative, such moralizing is sounded in counterpoint with another and more central theme. "When affairs were so helpless," as a consequence of assaults from the Huns and other barbarians, "God gave manifest proofs of special favor toward the present reign [of the Christian emperor in Constantinople]." And to underscore the contrast between East and West, he continued: "Thus was the Eastern empire preserved from the evils of war, and governed with high order, contrary to all expectations, for its ruler was still young. In the meantime, the Western empire fell a prey to disorders, because many tyrants arose." The defeat of enemies foreign and domestic by the royal house of Theodosius was a manifestation of divine mercy and a victory by God himself. In his explanation of the character and career of Theodosius, Socrates called upon a biblical prototype.

> What is recorded of Moses in the Book of Numbers, "Now the man Moses was very meek, above all the men who were upon the face of the earth" [Num. 12:3], may now be appropriately applied today; for the Emperor Theodosius is "meek above all the men who are upon the face of the earth." It is because of this meekness that God has subdued his enemies without military conflict. . . . For the God of the universe has granted this most devout emperor in our times supernatural aid of a similar kind to what was vouchsafed to the righteous in the past.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The biblical exegesis in this portrait of Theodosius is noteworthy, not only for its application to him of the word "meek," which was the same Greek word used in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:5)—"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"—but also for the identification of the "most devout" Christian emperor with Moses. In this identification, as in his history as a whole, Socrates was patterning himself after his predecessor and the founder of Byzantine historiography, Eusebius of Caesarea.[5] When Eusebius had taken up the task of narrating the "miracles more wonderful than fables," of which he had been an eyewitness and to some extent even a participant, he worked out a full-scale typology, based on the life of Moses, by which to describe the emperor Constantine. Just as Moses, the future deliverer of his people, had been reared in the palace of Pharaoh and educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians (Acts 7:22), so, according to Eusebius's *Life of Constantine*, Constantine "dwelt in the very home of the tyrants" until the appointed time came for him to emerge as the liberator. The victory of Constantine over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 became, in the dramaturgy of Book IX of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (apparently added in 315), a grand reenactment of the "song at the sea" recorded in chapter 15 of the Book of Exodus.

> As in the time of Moses himself and of the ancient God-beloved race of the Hebrews, "he cast Pharaoh's chariots and host into the sea . . . ," in the same way Maxentius also with his soldiers . . . "went down into the depths like a stone," when he fled before the power of God that was with Constantine.

"Like Moses, the great servant of God," Constantine and his hosts celebrated the victory that God had granted to them also over the tyrant.

And so they entered into the Promised Land. Thus the decisive event in the history of Rome was, in the interpretation of Eusebius and of the Byzantine historians who followed him, the conversion of the emperor Constantine and hence of the Roman empire to the Christian faith. It was essential to that interpretation to hold to the legitimacy of Constantine's claim to the imperial throne, for which God had destined him. Therefore, according to Eusebius, "Constantine, the most mighty victor, . . . reconquered the East . . . and formed the Roman empire, *as in the days of old*, into a single unified whole." To Socrates and Sozomen too, it was no less essential that Theodosius be acknowledged as the legitimate Caesar. The theme of their histories, consequently, was continuity. "Continuity *[diadochē]*" was the word with which Eusebius opened his *Ecclesiastical History*, and it became a leitmotiv of the entire work. The lists of bishops in Eusebius served as documentation of continuity, as did his account of the "school of Alexandria," founded by Pantaenus, who was followed by Clement, who was followed in turn by the wondrous Origen. Various scholars have commented on Eusebius's propensity for discovering successions, not only in the hierarchy of the church, but elsewhere.

In Constantinople, that continuity took the form of the name "New Rome." "Having rendered it equal to imperial Rome," Socrates tells us, Constantine "named it Constantinople," establishing by law that it should be designated New Rome. As New Rome, Constantinople (according to the famous—or notorious—twenty-eighth canon of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, held at Chalcedon in 451) "is honored with the sovereignty and the Senate, and enjoys

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

equal privileges with imperial Old Rome." So the continuity of "imperial Old Rome" lay now with "New Rome," the city of the most holy and God-fearing emperors. It was, the Byzantine historians were sure, providential that Constantine should have established New Rome just when he did, for he had preserved the continuity of the empire in the very nick of time. What fell to Alaric's marauding Goths in 410, by this reading of history, was Old Rome, not New Rome, and certainly not the Roman empire, whose continuity had been assured by the transfer. For them also, there were "two cities," not pagan Old Rome and an evangelized New Rome in the same location, but Old Rome and New Rome, both now Christian. The competition between these two cities in the millennium between the fall of Old Rome in 410 and the fall of New Rome in 1453 is a major theme of medieval history.

III

Yet the magisterial account of "two cities" to have been evoked by the events of the fourth and fifth centuries was, of course, Augustine's *City of God*, to which, in many ways, Gibbon was writing an answer.[6] Augustine, in turn, was also writing an answer, not alone to the pagan critics of the church, who were blaming the catastrophe of 410 on the apostasy of Rome from the faith of her fathers, but to other Christians as well, including Jerome and Eusebius-Socrates-Sozomen. It was chiefly on Jerome and Eusebius that Augustine drew for the chronology of world history in relation to sacred history that underlies Book XVIII of the *City of God* (which is the closest he came to a universal history in the work). Even more important than this dependence upon these two writers is the implicit polemic against their interpretations of the events of the time.

For while Augustine in the *City of God* did pay his respects to Jerome's *Commentary on Daniel*, as a book "written with considerable care and erudition," he was in fact breaking quite sharply with its apocalypticism. An apt illustration of his difference from Jerome in the description of Old Rome is what Augustine did with the words from 2 Thessalonians discussed earlier. Although most patristic exegetes took "he who now holds it back" as a reference to Old Rome, Augustine was obliged to "acknowledge that I do not know what it means," but he went on to recite various conjectures. The first of these was the standard view, which he was willing to call "not absurd," but it is obvious that he found it less than satisfying. He seems to have been drawn more to the interpretation of what "now holds it back" as the presence of the wicked within the empirical church; but even this did not seem quite right, and he had to leave the meaning of the passage in doubt. What was not in doubt was the error of the chiliastic definition of the kingdom of God that so often underlay early Christian attitudes toward Old Rome. "Ridiculous fancies" was only one of the terms he used for such a definition. In a lengthy excursus, contained appropriately in Book XX of the *City of God*, he examined various interpretations of the twentieth chapter of the Book of Revelation, concluding that "it is about this kingdom militant, in which the conflict with the enemy is still going on, . . . that the Apocalypse is speaking." In the striking phrase of Hermann Reuter, "the millennium was transformed from an eschatological fact to a period of church history."[7]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Yet in locating the thousand years' rule of the saints immanently within this present history, Augustine was not adopting the Eusebian understanding of continuity between Old Rome and New Rome. Again, it is instructive to examine one specific item of interpretation: the Christian emperors. Augustine did indeed praise Constantine as a worshiper of the true God, and he attributed the successes and victories of this Christian emperor to the action of God. But he said all of this only after he had pointed out, a few paragraphs earlier, that the God who ruled human history had granted power not only to Augustus but also to Nero, and that "He who gave it to the Christian Constantine gave it also to the apostate Julian," in accordance with His sovereign, but hidden, will. As for the Christian emperor Theodosius the Great, to whose grandson and namesake Sozomen and Socrates had addressed their panegyrics, Augustine, after reciting various evidences of the emperor's devotion to Christ and to the orthodoxy of the church (which made him, for Augustine, as Peter Brown says,[8] "a model Christian prince"), climaxed his tribute with a description of the ultimate proof of the piety of Theodosius, namely, his willingness in 390 to prostrate himself in public penance before the discipline of the church after he had sinned—an incident about which Augustine would have known directly from Ambrose of Milan.

The dialectic at work in God's conferring of power on Constantine, the pious, and then on Julian, the apostate, was a characteristic of the historical process. For the relation between the City of God and the earthly city was, within this historical process, a dialectical one. "The two cities," Augustine wrote, "are entangled together *[perplexae]* in this world, and intermixed until the Last Judgment brings about their separation," and their history was a "checkered" one. There was likewise a dialectic in the history of the earthly city itself, as was evident in the history of Old Rome. Augustine could neither condemn Old Rome altogether nor commend it unequivocally. He paid tribute to Cato both for his personal virtue, which Augustine judged to have come closest in his time to the true definition of uprightness, and for his contribution to the Roman republic. God had, according to Augustine, granted to the Romans "the terrestrial glory of that most excellent empire" as a reward for their virtue; this was not the reward granted to the elect in the City of God, but it was a genuine reward nonetheless. And in the peroration to Book II, he called upon the Romans to "purge and perfect" their virtues by turning to the true God and forsaking their idols. On the other hand, it was the worship of these idols and the consequent excesses of ambition and vainglory that vitiated the peace and justice to which Rome claimed to be devoted; and if justice was undermined, what was a "kingdom" but a fancy name for robbery?

But Augustine's historical dialectic is no less visible in his description of the history of the City of God in time. Throughout most of the work, Augustine did not provide an empirical referent for the term *civitas Dei*, until in Book XX there came the identification of it with the church—or to be precise, the identification of the church as "the kingdom of Christ"—six times in one chapter alone. It was, moreover, the historical, indeed the hierarchical church to which he attached this identification. But this equation was only half of the dialectic. The church in the ultimate sense—as in Augustine's other writings, so also in the *City of God*—was the New Jerusalem, the company of the elect,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

known only to God. To this City there belonged some who were not now a part of empirical, organized Christendom—as did Paul, even when he was a persecutor of the church—while others who were now pillars of the institutional church were in fact not members of the City of God, the true church. Augustine set forth this historical dialectic in the very first book of the *City of God*. Having replied to pagan charges blaming Christians for the fall of the City of Rome, Augustine continued:

> Let these and similar answers . . . be given to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ, and by the pilgrim City of Christ the King. But let this City bear in mind that among her enemies lie hidden those who are destined to be fellow citizens. . . . So, too, as long as she is a stranger in the world, the City of God has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who shall not eternally dwell in the inheritance of the saints.

Whether the theme be apocalypse or continuity or dialectic, "we are reminded of ancient Rome." If one could write the history of the interpretations of Rome and of its decline and fall in subsequent historiography and philosophy, one would at the same time have a valuable series of insights into how various societies have understood themselves. "An empire without end *[imperium sine fine]*" was Virgil's (and Augustus's) dream of Rome, a dream to which the events of 410 were a rude and cruel awakening. Yet in a deeper sense, the Roman empire has had an afterlife even more awe-inspiring than were the centuries of its military and political hegemony. For the dominance of Latin over the language and thought of Europe throughout most of its history; the pervasive influence of Roman law; the very use of such terms as "republic" and "senate" in our own political vocabulary; and by a curious twist, even the preoccupation with its decline and fall as historical paradigm, in which Old Rome was always the first of the "two cities," whatever the second may have been—all these themes of the history of the West seem to show that Old Rome has in fact exercised its sway over greater territory and for a longer time than ever it did in the days of the Caesars.

References

[1]*Das Kapital*, part 7, Chapter 27; *The Wealth of Nations*, book 3, chapter 2; *The Federalist*, nos. 18, 41, 63.

[2]At the time of the two bicentennials, I dealt briefly with these issues in an article in *Harper's* for July 1976, and in response to a paper by Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., "The Lessons of History," in Philadelphia on July 4, 1976.

[3]See Jean-Remy Palanque, "St. Jerome and the Barbarians," in *A Monument to St. Jerome*, edited by Francis X. Murphy (New York: 1952), pp. 171-99, and the moving chapter, "Gathering Gloom," in *Jerome*, by J. N. D. Kelly (London: 1975), pp. 296-308.

[4]Walter Emil Kaegi, Jr.'s, *Byzantium and the Decline of Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968) is an incisive analysis.

[5]On Eusebius, compare the recent studies of Timothy Barnes and Robert M. Grant, as well as the comments, still useful, in the English translations of A. C. McGiffert and of Lawlor and Oulton.

[6]"Divine Necessity and Human History," the closing chapter of *Christianity and Classical Culture*, by Charles Norris Cochrane (Oxford: 1944, pp. 446-516), is still, in my judgment, the most provocative discussion of Augustine's *City of God*, whether or not one accepts Cochrane's interpretation.

[7]Hermann Reuter, *Augustinische Studien* (Gotha: 1887), p. 114.

[8]Peter Brown, *Augustine of Hippo* (London: 1967), p. 291.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

WENDY DONIGER O'FLAHERTY

The Dream Narrative and the Indian Doctrine of Illusion

ONE OF THE MOST ENCHANTING and stimulating unsolved riddles is the paradox of the dream within the dream, or the dreamer dreamt.[1] In its broadest outlines, this is a theme that has intrigued philosophers and poets throughout the world. Plato pointed out that it was never possible, at any given moment, to prove "whether we are asleep and our thoughts are a dream, or whether we are awake and talking with each other in a waking condition."[2] The idea that we might be characters in someone else's dream—more precisely, in God's dream—recurs in many of the footnotes to Plato, notably in Bishop Berkeley. In literature, we encounter this theme in Calderone *(Life Is a Dream)* and in Lewis Carroll (as a satire on Berkeley).[3] The more specific theme of the dream adventure—of the hero who undergoes apparently real experiences for years, but awakens to find that only a moment has passed—was elaborately developed in China and Japan, and occurs in Islamic and Spanish sources as well. Roger Caillois, who has collected many dream adventures of this type, notes some of its recurrent motifs:

> Someone, in a dream, wakes up—or rather believes that he has awakened, although he continues to dream—and now lies expecting another awakening, which this time may be real but may also be as illusionary as the first. In this way he will be transported from one dream to another, from one awakening to another, without ever being absolutely certain whether he has finally arrived at the true awakening, the one that will restore him to the world of reality. . . . Since, at every moment of the dream, the sleeper is unaware of the fact that he is dreaming, and is even convinced that he is awake, it is clear that there can never be a moment in which a person who believes himself to be awake does not have to entertain the suspicion of a doubt that he might perhaps at that time actually be dreaming. This problem has benefited from a long and complex philosophical history.[4]

Closely related to the question of whether we are dreaming or being dreamt is the corollary question of whether we are dramatists or the characters in someone else's dramas. Shakespeare was drawn back to this riddle again and again, in plays dealing with the themes of dreams and illusions (such as *The Tempest*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *A Winter's Tale*), or employing the device of the play within the play (as in *Hamlet* and *Henry IV, Part I*). More recently, the paradox has been taken up by surrealist artists like Réne Magritte and M. C. Escher, surrealist playwrights like Pirandello (with his characters in search of an author) and Tom Stoppard (with *Rosenkrantz and Guildenstern Are*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Dead serving as a play within which we may view Shakespeare's already nested plays), and in the stories of Jorge Luis Borges[5] and Mircea Eliade.[6]

When we look more closely at the distribution of this theme, we begin to see a pattern, a complex *mandala* that has India as its center. While Plato was expounding the idealism that we think of as Platonic, Indian sages were composing the even more idealistic Upanishads. The Chinese and Japanese stories were based on tales carried to the Far East by Indian Buddhists; and the Spanish stories were retellings of tales brought by Islamic traders from India. Moreover, whereas the story of the dreamer dreamt was regarded in the West primarily as an exotic delicacy, an appetizer to titillate the mind for a while before one got down to serious philosophizing, in India it was the main course, philosophically speaking; it was taken very seriously indeed, as an elusive clue to a real truth. As Caillois remarks of the dream adventure in European romantic literature,

> Very frequently the dream remains a fairy tale that is dispelled by the awakening and to which at times a cumbersome allegorical value is attributed; it has nothing in common with the intellectual complications of the Oriental dream. "It was only a dream," the sleeper cries out upon awakening, occasionally disappointed, occasionally relieved, all according to whether the dream gratified or oppressed him. It is never more than an illusion, which may have been pleasing or distressing, but which the opening of the eyelids suffices to send back into nothingness.[7]

In India, by contrast, the dream adventure often proves the very opposite point, the "nothingness" of the world that we see when we open our eyes, or the substantial reality of the dream itself.

The most complex example of this genre of fiction that I know occurs in a Sanskrit text called the *Yogavasishtha-maharamayana*, composed in Kashmir in the ninth century of our era.[8] This text is well loved by Indians; it has been translated into many of the vernacular Indian languages and has found its way into "anonymous" oral traditions.[9] It is a curious blend of abstract, classical Indian philosophy and vivid, detailed Indian folklore, a kind of *Reader's Digest* or *Classic Comic* version of the doctrine of illusion. In it, a philosophy that often seems hollowly inhuman comes to life when the narrative spells out its wildest implications. It is as if someone took the abstract concept, "The universe is unreal," and made it somehow anthropomorphic, producing a kind of teaching device to make us understand what it *feels* like to realize that everything is unreal. And, of course, it can't be done; in our hearts, we don't believe it. But the narrative allows us—nay, forces us—to imagine ourselves in a situation in which we *must* believe it, in which we must act out the paradox.

The story is about two philosophical ideas: it is about the way the mind apprehends the world, and about the way the world is. More particularly, it is about the way the two problems are related, the way our minds affect the world, and the way the world exists in our minds. It is a kind of religious parable, but more than that, it is a metaparable, a parable about parables, for it is *about* storytelling, as well as an example of storytelling. It builds the philosophy into the story by placing a running commentary in the mouths of several of the central characters, and it builds our minds—the minds of us, the audience, as we listen to the tale—into the text by drawing us deeper and deeper

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

into the tale within the tale. In this way it embodies, as well as talks about, the paradox of the author who is a character in someone else's story, the dreamer who is a figure in someone else's dream.

"The Monk Who Met the People in His Dreams"

Once upon a time there was a monk who was inclined to imagine things rather a lot. He would meditate and study all the time, and fast for days on end. One day this fancy came to him: "Just for fun, I will experience what happens to ordinary people." As soon as he had this idea, his thought somehow took the form of another man, and that man wished for an identity and a name, even though he was just made of thought. And by pure accident, as when a crow happens to be under a tree when a palm fruit falls from it and hits him, he thought, "I am Jivata." This dream man, Jivata, enjoyed himself for a long time in a town made in a dream. There he drank too much and fell into a heavy sleep, and in his dream he saw a Brahmin who read all day long. One day that Brahmin fell asleep, worn out from the day's work, but those daily activities were still alive within him, like a tree inside a seed, and so he saw himself, in a dream, as a prince. One day that prince fell asleep after a heavy meal, and in his dream he saw himself as a king who ruled many lands and indulged in every sort of luxury. One day that king fell asleep, having gorged himself on his every desire, and in his dream he saw himself as a celestial woman. That woman fell into a deep sleep in the languor that followed making love, and she saw herself as a doe with darting eyes. That doe one day fell asleep and dreamed that she was a clinging vine, because she had been accustomed to eating vines; for animals dream too, and they always remember what they have seen and heard.

The vine saw herself as a bee, that used to buzz among the vines; the bee fell in love with a lotus in a lotus pond and became so intoxicated by the lotus sap he drank, that his wits became numb one day; and just then an elephant came to that pond and trampled the lotus, and the bee, still attached to the lotus, was crushed with it on the elephant's tusk. As the bee looked at the elephant, he saw himself as an elephant in rut. That elephant in rut fell into a deep pit and became the favorite elephant of a king. One day the elephant was cut to pieces by a sword in battle, and as he went to his final resting place, he saw a swarm of bees hovering over the sweet ichor that oozed from his temples, and so the elephant became a bee again. The bee returned to the lotus pond and was trampled under the foot of an elephant, and just then he noticed a goose beside him in the pond, and so he became a goose. The goose moved through other births, other wombs, for a long time, until one day, when he was a goose in a flock of other geese, he realized that, being a goose, he was the same as the swan of Brahma, the Creator. Just as he had this thought, he was shot by a hunter and he died, and then he was born as the swan of Brahma.

One day the swan saw the god Rudra, and he thought, with sudden certainty, "I am Rudra." Immediately that idea was reflected like an image in a mirror, and he took on the form of Rudra. This Rudra indulged in every pleasure that entered his mind, living in the palace of Rudra and attended by Rudra's servants. But the Rudra that he had become had a special power of knowledge, and in his mind he could see every single one of his former experiences. He was amazed by the hundred dreams he had had, and he said to

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

himself, "How wonderful! This complicated illusion fools everyone; what is unreal seems to be real, like water in a desert that turns out to be a mirage. I am something that can be thought, and I have been thought.

"There happened to be a soul that, by chance, became a monk in some universe, and he experienced what he had been thinking about: he became Jivata. But because Jivata admired Brahmins, he saw himself as a Brahmin; and since the Brahmin had thought about princes all the time, he became a prince. And since that prince was inclined to do things in order to run a kingdom, he became a king; and because the king was full of lust, he became a celestial woman. And that fickle woman was so jealous of the beautiful eyes of a doe that she became a doe; and the doe became a vine that she had noticed, and the vine saw herself as a bee that she had observed for a long time, and the bee was trampled under the feet of an elephant that he had seen, and he wandered in and out of a series of rebirths. At the end of the round of a hundred rebirths is Rudra, and I am Rudra, I am he, the one who stands in the flux of rebirths where everyone is fooled by his own mind. For my amusement, I will raise up all those creatures who are my own rebirths, and I will look at them, and by giving them the ability to look at the matter as it really is, I will make them unite into one."

When Rudra had decided upon this, he went to that universe where the monk was sleeping in his monastery, like a corpse. Joining his mind to the monk's mind, Rudra woke him up; and then the monk realized the error he had made (in believing his life as Jivata to be real). And when the monk looked at Rudra, who was the monk himself and was also made of Jivata and the others, he was amazed, though one who was truly enlightened would not have found cause for amazement. Then Rudra and the monk went, the two of them together, to a certain place in a corner of the space of the mind where Jivata had been reborn, and then they saw him asleep, unconscious, still holding a sword in his hand: the corpse of Jivata. Joining their minds to his mind, they woke him up, and then, though they were one, they had three forms: Rudra and Jivata and the monk. Though they were awake, they did not seem to be awake; they were amazed, and yet not amazed, and they stood there in silence for a moment, like images painted in a picture.

Then all three of them went through the sky to the place, echoing in the empty air, where the Brahmin had been reborn, and there they saw the Brahmin in his house, asleep, with his wife, the Brahmin lady, clasping him around his neck. They joined their minds to his mind and woke him up, and they all stood there, overcome with amazement. Then they went to the place where the king had been reborn, and they awakened him with their mind, and then they wandered through the other rebirths until they reached the swan of Brahma. And at that moment they all united together and became Rudra, a hundred Rudras in one.

Then they were all awakened by Rudra and they all rejoiced and looked upon one another's rebirths, seeing illusion for what it was. Then Rudra said, "Now go back to your own places and enjoy yourselves there with your families for awhile, and then come back to me. And at doomsday, all of us, the bands of creatures who are part of me, will go to the ultimate resting place." And Rudra vanished, and Jivata and the Brahmin and the others all went back to their own

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

places with their own families, but after a while they will wear out their bodies and will unite again back in the world of Rudra, and they will be seen as stars in the sky (*Yogavasishtha* 6.1.62.1-31, 6.1.63.1-75, 6.1.64.1-8).[10]

* * *

This story is a highly sophisticated variant of a much loved Indo-European folk motif, which includes the story of Chicken-Licken (who told Henny-Penny who told Foxy-Loxy . . . that the sky was falling) and The House That Jack Built. The theme also appears in European literature as the motif of "Magic: Man magically made to believe himself bishop, archbishop, and pope."[11] But instead of piling up barnyard animals or clergymen, the Indian text piles up nested figments of the imagination.

This extraordinary story speaks directly to us, here in America in 1982, even though it is part of a text that was composed in India more than a thousand years ago. It is, I think, possible for us to ask our own questions of this text, twentieth century American questions, but before we can do this, we must first try to understand, as well as we can, what questions the author meant us to ask of it. This task is greatly facilitated for us by the fact that many of these questions are written right into the text. The story of the monk's dream is narrated by the great sage Vasishtha to Prince Rama (the same Rama who is the hero of the great Indian epic, the *Ramayana*), and Rama asks Vasishtha a number of questions, many of them the very questions that would occur to an American first encountering this story—literal-minded, earthbound, rather flat-footed questions, it would seem.

> Rama asked, "How did Jivata and the Brahmin and the other forms that the monk imagined become real? How can an object of the imagination be real?" Vasishtha said, "The reality of the imagination is only partial; do not take it for something entirely real. What isn't there, isn't there. Yet the true nature of what is seen in a dream or visualized by the imagination exists at all times. Everything exists in a corner of the mind . . . (6.1.64.6-13). A person sees a dream as if it were a hard thing, and then from that dream he falls back into another dream, and from that into yet another dream, and each time it appears hard and firm" (6.1.65.6-8). Then Rama asked, "What became of the hundred Rudras? *Were* they all Rudras, or weren't they? And how could a hundred minds be made from a single mind? How could they be made by that Rudra who was himself made in someone's dream?" Vasishtha replied, "The monk visualized a hundred bodies in a hundred dreams. But all those forms in the dream *were*, in fact, Rudra, a hundredfold Rudra. For those who have removed the veil from reality can imagine things so precisely that those mental perceptions are actually experienced. And because of the omnipresence of the universal soul, something that is experienced in a particular way and in a particular place by a mind with true understanding will actually come into existence in that way at that very place" (6.1.69.1-6).

On the one hand, the text seems to say, all the things that we think are real are only parts of a dream—our dream, or someone's else's dream. On the other

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

hand, there *is* a reality in dreams, for the things that we imagine or dream are reflections of some reality that does exist at all times and in all places, and happens to get into *our* minds "by accident," like the accident that makes the monk think that he is Jivata. In this view, mental images are reflections of an underlying reality; there *was* a Jivata, and the monk dreamt of him; it only remained then for Rudra to find the Jivata that the monk had dreamt of, and introduce the two of them. Though the monk dreamed of a hundred people, those people did exist as a part of the god Rudra. Yet the text also implies that the monk had the power to dream them into existence from his mind upward, all the way up the line from the monk to the swan to Rudra; and Rudra had the power to think them all into existence as part of himself, from his mind downward, all the way from the swan to the monk. The text tells us that all the people in the dream are part of Rudra, physically; and it also says that they are part of his mind, his dream. These are not contradictions. For Rudra to think of something is for him both to make it exist and to find that it has always existed. These two kinds of creation—"making" and "finding"—are the same, for in both cases, the mind imposes its idea upon the spirit/matter dough of reality, cutting it up like a cookie cutter, now into stars, now into hearts, now into elephants, now into swans. It makes them, and it finds them already there, like a sculptor (or a *bricoleur*) making new forms out of *objets trouvés*.[12]

Rudra's mind is the mold that stamps out images, all of which ultimately derive from him. He stamps this mold upon the spirit/matter continuum of the universe in such a way that it breaks up into the separate (or rather, apparently separate) consciousnesses of all of us. The images that he sketches in our minds were already there—in the continuum, and in our minds—but we cannot know them until his mind touches ours, until he "joins his mind to (our) mind." Finally, when we *really* know Rudra, the images vanish, and the continuum is seen as it really is—devoid of the fragments of individual figures. Then the background becomes the foreground.

This philosophy is made explicit at many points throughout the text, often in the form of explanatory remarks made by the storyteller (Vasishtha) to clarify what he regards as difficult or important points in the narrative, or in response to questions. It is a philosophy well known in India from the time of the Upanishads, a millennium and a half before our text was composed. Yet it may not have been the predominant cultural assumption, the shared "common sense," in India at that time.[13] This is, I think, evident from the text's repeated insistence that all the characters in the story were *amazed* to find that the lives they had taken for real were merely parts of someone else's dreams; or contrariwise, that people they had just dreamed about turned out to be real people they could talk to. They are amazed at *both* implications: the implication that their real lives are dreams and the implication that their dreams are real—or rather, as real as their waking lives. They had assumed, as we usually assume, that dreams are unreal and that lives are real. Even at the very end of the story, Rama cannot understand how the hundred Rudras could become real, and the commentator explains his quandary:

> Rama asked his question because he did not think it was possible that the matter could be as it seemed, and as it had just been said to be, as in the verse that stated, "He awakened the monk, joining mind to mind"—that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> is, he did not think that one *could* awaken the monk and the others by transferring consciousness from Rudra's mind, or that in that way Rudra could make a hundred people by making the monk have a hundred dreams. (Commentary on 6.1.69.4)

Even Rudra himself is said to have been amazed by his realization that his hundred dreams had thought themselves to be real, though he then conquers his amazement and carefully puzzles it all out (6.1.63.6).

It must be granted that the narrator's insistence on the "amazement" of the characters in the story is, in part, a literary device (one that is well known from Christian miracle tales) to emphasize the importance of the extraordinary event and to provide us with doubting fools, fall guys set up either to be converted or to provide a foil for those who are converted. Nevertheless, these "amazed" participants and bystanders must also represent the point of view that the narrator would have expected to find in at least some of his audience. One might argue that the experience of surprise at reality-switching is more common—and hence less surprising—in India than in the West, since their epistemological assumptions make it possible to cross the borders more easily and more often. Yet such a boundary is taken for granted, even in India.[14] The fact that we too in the West experience "amazement" (or even disbelief) when we first hear this story is not, I think, irrelevant. In any case, we will read ourselves into any text that we read; not only *may* we ask our own questions of the text; we cannot *help* asking our own questions. But I would argue that it must have been extremely difficult, if not impossible, for anyone, anywhere, ever to have maintained the extreme form of the belief that the entire universe, including oneself, was totally unreal. Nor does this text, finally, ask its readers to believe this.

The text presents us with a rather extreme philosophical doctrine—that there is no crucial difference, or perhaps, no recognizable or testable difference, between waking reality and dream images. Thus it states that "truly enlightened people" would *not* have been amazed by the monk's experience. Then it gives us a number of people who *are* astonished when presented with evidence that this might be true. But the paradox does not rest there. Rama asks another set of questions that moves the dilemma onto another level altogether.

> When Vasishtha had finished speaking, Rama asked, "*Is* there such a monk? Search within yourself and tell me right away." Vasishtha said, "Tonight I will go into a deep trance and search the universe to find out if there is such a monk or not, and tomorrow morning I will tell you." When they assembled again on the next morning, Vasishtha said, "Rama, I searched for that monk for a long time yesterday, with the eye of knowledge, the eye of meditation. Hoping to see such a monk, I wandered through the seven continents, and over the mountains of the earth, but no matter how far I went, I could not find such a monk; for how could something from the realm of the mind be found outside it? But then, near dawn, once more I went north in my mind, to a glorious country named Jina, where there is a famous monastery built over an anthill. And in that monastery, in the corner of a hut, there was a monk named Far-sight (Dirghadrisha), who had been meditating for twenty-one nights. His own servants did not enter his firmly bolted house, for they feared they might

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> disturb his meditation. In a former eon there was once another monk of this very sort, just as I described him, and this one today is a second. Then, just in play, I searched through other universes, and finally I found, in a universe in the corner of space in the future, another monk just like that, with the same powers. And even in this very assembly there are people who will someday have the very same experiences and take on such a form and do such things, when this illusion will cast its spell over them."
>
> Then Rama's father, Dasharatha, said to Vasishtha, "Greatest of sages, let me send my men to the hut of that monk to awaken him and bring him right back here." Vasishtha said, "Great king, the body of that monk no longer has the breath of life in it; it is dissolved with rot; it is no longer the vessel of a living creature. The soul of that monk has become the swan of Brahma; during his own lifetime he has been released and is no longer subject to rebirth. At the end of a month the monk's servants, longing to see him, will force open the bolts, and they will wash his body and throw it out. Since the monk himself has left that body and has gone somewhere else, how could anyone wake up that ruined corpse in the monastery?" (6.1.65.10-20; 6.1.66.1-28; 6.1.67.1-6)

What are we to make of this epilogue? Rama's question begins to consider the possible reality not of the characters in the monk's dream, but of the monk himself—that is, the reality status of a character in a story told by Vasishtha. And in his response to Rama, Vasishtha jumps out of the frame of narration and into his own story, just as the monk jumps out of the frame of his dream to meet the people he dreams of—or perhaps, as Rudra jumps out of the frame of his divine mind to meet the thoughts in it. This adds a new dimension to the nested levels of the dream—for now we have Vasishtha "thinking" of Rudra who is "realizing" the monk who is "dreaming" of Jivata and the others. It also adds another figure, Vasishtha, to the list of those who are privileged to manipulate the strings of the puppets within the cosmic drama by giving physical form to their mental images.

Vasishtha is at first skeptical of any possibility that his own mental constructs could be real; as he says to Rama, "No matter how far I went, I could not find such a monk; for how could something from the realm of the mind be found outside it?" (6.1.66.6) It would appear that, at this point at least, Vasishtha aligns himself with those who are "amazed" to find their mental creations coming to life. Yet he *does* go to look for the monk, nevertheless. By seeking the monk, Vasishtha acts out the idealistic assumptions of the text, assumptions that have already been challenged by the skepticism of Rama, whose doubts are at first echoed by Vasishtha himself. But Vasishtha finds the monk. By finding him, Vasishtha both discredits that skepticism and greatly strengthens and enhances the idealistic argument, for he demonstrates that not only dreams, but even works of artistic creation—the stories that we make up to prove a point—reflect some aspect of reality, one that most of us do not have the powers to prove as did Vasishtha. This is an important extension, for it implies that this reality is reflected not only in dreams—which we take to be real while dreaming, but which we retroactively define as unreal when we awaken—but even in stories that we take to be unreal from the very start. From the god's-eye view, all stories are true.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Why did Vasishtha think he could find the monk, since the monk was merely a creature in a story he had told and, supposedly, made up himself? The commentary suggests that Rama might have wrestled with this problem before framing his question to Vasishtha:

> Rama was full of doubt and curiosity. He praised his guru and recognized the purpose of his instruction, but he said, "Search within yourself and ask yourself this question: 'Even though I imagined this monk and spoke about him in order to enlighten you, Rama, nevertheless did he actually come into existence somewhere?' For it is simply not possible that a person that you would talk about would not have some sort of true essence." (Commentary on 6.1.65.13)

Rama was amazed by the tale of the monk's dream; that is, he shared to some extent our "common sense" intuition that dreams are not real. Yet Rama's question, and Vasishtha's implicit affirmative answer—for he does go to look for the monk—suggest that both of them were at least half-convinced of the real existence of the monk; that is, they shared to some extent the philosophy set forth in the text, in flagrant violation of their common sense. Their ambivalence is explicitly stated: they were amazed, and not amazed. They wanted to find out *for sure*, and so Vasishtha set out to test his hypothesis. Both Rama and Vasishtha felt that there was, in fact, a possibility that Vasishtha's mental creations *might* have a physical reality. This is the psychology of the text. (The fact that it never occurred to Vasishtha to go and look for the monk until Rama asked him to do so, and the brusqueness of his initial reply to Rama—"How could you expect to find . . ."—probably indicate Vasishtha's belief that it does not really matter at all if one finds the specific, "real" monk of the dream; Vasishtha's didactic point lies elsewhere. Nevertheless, to please Rama, he does go and look, and he is not at all "amazed" in the end to find that the monk does exist.)

The monk's existence might be explained in at least two ways, corresponding to Rudra's "finding" or "making" the figures in his dream. Each of these explanations carries with it a different implication about the nature of reality; together they provide an expression of the ontology of the text. The first, implicit in the commentator's gloss, is the possibility that certain people might have the power instinctively to "tune in" on some real, already existing physical phenomenon—a person, a life, a city—while apparently just imagining such a phenomenon in a spirit of pure play, or by pure chance. This is what Rama means when he says, "Whatever a person like *you* (i.e., the great sage Vasishtha) would talk about," must have some sort of true essence: such a sage would instinctively make up something *real*, even when constructing a hypothetical case. Later, when Rama asks Vasishtha if the hundred Rudras were real, Vasishtha replies, "The hundred bodies that the monk saw in his dreams—all of that was just thought up for the sake of explanation, and so I did not talk about them (in detail)" (6.1.69.2). Though Vasishtha did not bother to invent all the details, the details *were there;* Vasishtha just told Rama there were a hundred Rudras, to make his pedagogic point. In the same way, the monk dreamed of Jivata and there *was* a Jivata, whom he later found with Rudra's help. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

second explanation is one that the text has already dwelt upon at some length: certain people, of whom Vasishtha is apparently one, have the power of making their mental projections, their dreams, become real physical objects—objects that had not existed until the powerful dreamer dreamed them into reality. In the context of our story, these two explanations are mutually supportive, not contradictory.

Thus when Dasharatha, the king, asks Vasishtha to bring the monk to court, Vasishtha gently points out the stupidity of the question, not on the basis of the argument that one could hardly expect to find the monk at all (the tentative and quickly disproved hypothesis with which Vasishtha had at first ridiculed Rama's question about the reality of the monk), but rather because the monk's body was so *very* real that it had, like all real bodies, eventually *ceased* to exist; that is, it had rotted away. The reality of that body is brought home to us by the great detail in which the situation at the monk's hut is described, his name, the barred door, the worried servants. (The Commentary [on 6.1.67.4] suggests that Vasishtha said to the king, "The monk had commanded his servants not to open the bolts of the house for a month, and even your ministers cannot awaken him.") If, then, the monk is real (either as a result of Vasishtha's creation of him or as the result of some former creation that Vasishtha instinctively recognized when he made up his story), how long has he been real? To put the question more broadly: Do the people in the monk's dream exist for just the one episode that Vasishtha tells us about, perhaps a few months of an adult life, and suddenly vanish when he wakes up or dies, or do they live entire lives, from birth to death, of which the monk witnesses only a brief fragment? Before we can answer this, we must try to decide whether this is a story about dreams or a story about rebirth.

Certainly it is, at least in part, a story about rebirth. When we reach the point where Rudra begins to retrace his footsteps, as it were, he refers to the "flux of rebirth *(samsara)* in which one is deluded by one's own mind" and the "various wildernesses of rebirth" through which he has wandered (6.1.63.21). Rudra then goes from one universe to another to find the place where the *re*birth (never the birth) of Jivata, the Brahmin, and so forth had taken place, or of even greater significance, had *begun;* and at the end, they all wander together in the grounds of other rebirths. For *samsara* primarily denotes the physical world in which creatures circulate through their repeated births and deaths. The figures at the beginning and the end of the chain of the monk's dream, directly inside the outer frame formed by the monk and Rudra, are a man named Jivata and a swan. Jivata (the only character in the dream who is given a proper name) is a derivative of *jiva,* the ordinary Sanskrit word used to denote the individual life or the transmigrating soul. The swan is an ancient Indian symbol for the soul, and more especially, for the returning soul, the transmigrating soul, based perhaps on the natural symbolism of the swan's migration. More particularly, the swan may symbolize the memory of past lives, as in a verse from a Sanskrit poem describing the moment when a princess came of age:

> When the time came for her to learn, all the knowledge from her former life came back to her, as the rows of swans come back to the Ganges in the autumn.[15]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

In another variant of the story of the dream of rebirth, a king who has become reborn as a woman meets a friend from his previous life as a king, who tells him, "Don't you remember your old friend? You and I, my dear, were two swans who lived together in the lake of the mind, until you left me to wander on earth. I created the illusion that made you think you were a man or a woman. Our true nature is as two swans." And when the swan of the mind was awakened by the other swan, he won back the memory that he had lost.[16] In this text, the swans are explicitly identified with the individual soul and the universal soul, and explicitly said to be one and the same.

In this sense, each of the levels within the monks' dream is a complete rebirth of a single soul that goes from Rudra to the monk to Jivata to the Brahmin and so forth, until it subsides back into Rudra again. This mechanism is clearly at work in the second half of the cycle, when the animals die and are reborn, presumably as young animals that grow up. On the other hand, it appears that the monk transfers his consciousness into an already existent Jivata, taking up Jivata's life *in medias res*, as it were, and Jivata joins consciousness with an already existent middle-aged Brahmin, and so forth. This mechanism would explain how all of them continued to exist when the monk awoke, and how they were able to meet and talk together when Rudra found them all. Once again, the text says both that the soul "makes" each new life (from birth to death) and that it "finds" its new lives (in midstream). There is one single soul, and there are a hundred different souls, and yet they are the same.

We do not see the entire rebirth of each of the characters; none of them is born, and most do not die within the story. The monk falls into a deep trance; Jivata passes out in a drunken stupor; the Brahmin falls asleep after a hard days' reading; the king and the celestial harlot are exhausted by pleasure; and so forth. These people dream and become what they have *habitually* dreamt about. Yet, near the end of the chain, some of the animals do seem to die and become what they happen to see at the moment of death: the bee is pulverized on the tusk of an elephant; the elephant is cut to pieces by a sword; the bee is trampled by another elephant. The elephant is actually (if euphemistically) said to have died, and the others experience violent accidents. The penultimate transition is explicitly said to be a death: the goose dies, shot by a hunter, and becomes the swan of Brahma. The swan then experiences the final and most subtle transition: as soon as he realizes that he is Rudra, his idea is instantly reflected like an image in a mirror—that is, it is projected outside of himself and becomes a solid figure, or if you prefer, it becomes reflected in the already existing figure of Rudra himself. The swan then takes the form of Rudra and abandons his (swan) body, just as the scent of a cluster of blossoms leaves the blossoms behind and is wafted away on the wind (6.1.63.1-3).

It would appear that the figures are arranged in a kind of hierarchy, and that the higher consciousnesses merely dream of a partial rebirth, while the lower ones must actually die, must endure physically what the others have merely experienced mentally. Setting aside for the moment the monk, as a special case to which we will return, we can see that the characters form three groups that steadily descend in metaphysical acuity (Figure 1). Jivata is defined as an ordinary sort of man who loves life; hence he is the logical starting point for an odyssey that is designed to dramatize for ordinary people (the ones who are

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

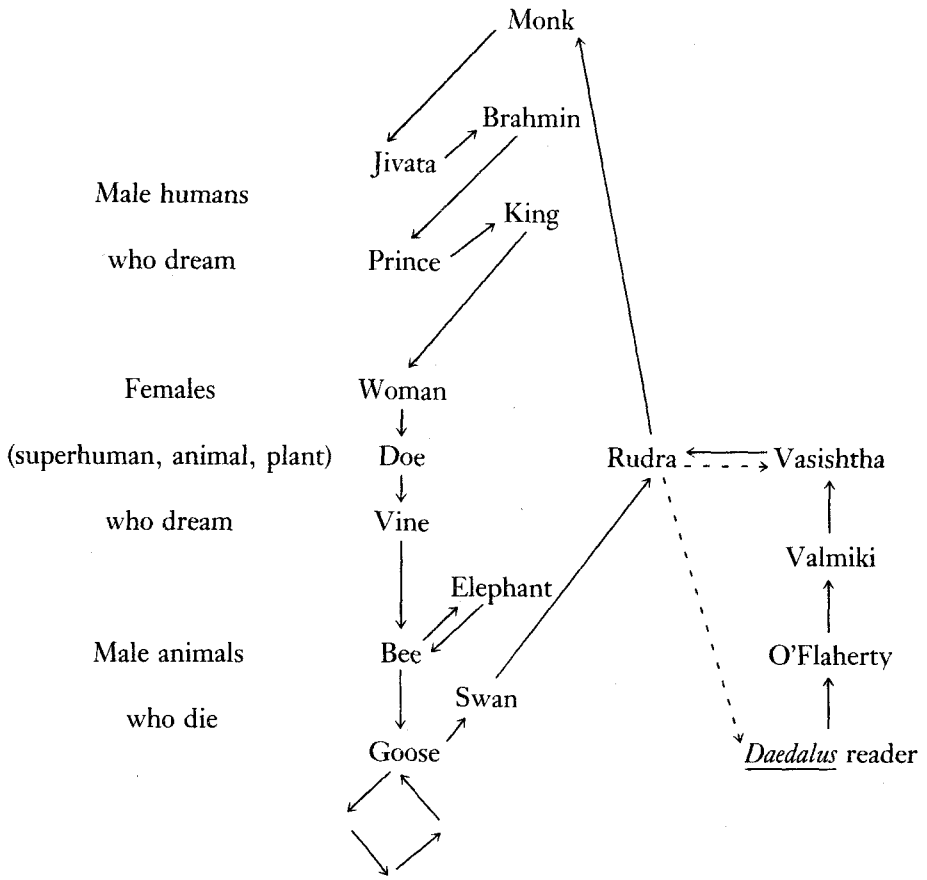


Figure 1. The Strange Loop of the Dream Within the Dream

"amazed" when the dividing line between dream and reality melts away) the doctrines of illusion and rebirth. He is, moreover, the random sample, the man in the street; the monk thinks of him "by pure chance" (6.1.62.7). Jivata is the literal embodiment of the transmigrating soul—of Everyman. Paired with Jivata, we encounter the highest human type: the learned Brahmin. In another story told by this same text, the tale of the Brahmin Gadhi, it is the Brahmin, not the monk, who is the pivotal figure, the dreamer of the outermost dream, but he experiences the dream helplessly, although with understanding.[17] In this tale of the monk's dream, by contrast, the outermost dreamer (the monk) actively sets out to produce the dream experience and to materialize it; and this activity, as we shall see, is proper only to perfected monks, not to ordinary Brahmins. Thus the Brahmin and Jivata are rightly paired as puppets, rather than puppeteers, in this particular episode. (There is, of course, one other Brahmin in the story—Vasishtha—but his role is even more peculiar than that of the monk, and we must postpone for the moment an analysis of his status in

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the hierarchy.) After the Brahmin come the prince and the king. The royal image is divided into two, of which the first is lower than the second, as was the case with our first pair.

Below the king is a triad of females who form the transition from higher to lower consciousness, one semidivine (the celestial woman), one animal (the doe), and one vegetable (the vine). These three figures are still part of the higher echelon who dream rather than die, and who become what they have always known, not what they see as they die. The text tells us that animals do dream. So too is the vine conscious; she is said to see in herself the embodiment of the loveliness that had been asleep and numb inside the doe for a long time (6.1.63.19; 6.1.62.20-21). The vine is the incarnation of the metaphor of female beauty (graceful women are always like clinging vines in Sanskrit poetry), even as Jivata is the embodiment of the soul.

The next quartet, like the first, is divided into two pairs. The elephant and the bee are animals closely associated with violence and eroticism; the wildness of the male elephant in rut carries fairly obvious symbolic meaning, and bees in Indian love poetry are said to form the bowstring of the god of lust, and to plunge deep inside the flowers that ooze with sap even as the elephant's temples ooze with ichor. In our text, the bee perishes because his lust for the lotus stupefies him and makes him stick to her even in death (6.1.62.22-6). The bee and the elephant find violent deaths, over and over again.

Then we encounter the last pair, the goose who becomes a swan. Here the hierarchy doubles back on itself; the lowest becomes the highest, and the swan becomes the god, Rudra. The true break comes within this pair: the goose has to be shot dead to become the swan, the only explicit death in the story and the most violent transition, but the swan merely "reflects" itself into Rudra, the least violent transition. Once we have reached the swan, we are home. At this point, there is no more dreaming; now we begin to unravel all that has been dreamt.

The creatures in the monk's dream form a pattern that is a masterful combination of order and chance. They are distributed to cover the full spectrum of consciousness, a point that the text emphasizes by its overall groupings: human males, nonhuman females, and male animals and insects. These groups are, I think, meant to depict a steady general decline. Yet within each group are upswings—Jivata moves up when he becomes a Brahmin or a prince; the bee improves his lot when he becomes an elephant; and the goose becomes a very special swan. Moreover, there are switchbacks (the elephant who relapses into beehood), redundancies (several bees), and finally a catchall group of "etceteras" at the end. These irregularities convey the richness and randomness of the process of reincarnation.

This random variation also characterizes the pattern through which all of us will, at some time before the end of infinity, become incarnate as that same monk, in much the same way as the monkey playing at his typewriter will eventually compose the complete works of Shakespeare. Yet, although anything *can* happen, certain things are more *likely* to happen; this is the way that karma skews and orders the chaos of the universe. As the same dream gets into different peoples' heads—in this case, the dream of the monk who meets the people in his dreams—there may be minor variations on the theme, minor changes in the manifestations of the archetype: "Again and again these lives

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revolve in creation like the waves in water, and some (rebirths) are strikingly similar (to what they were before), and others are about half the same; some are a little bit the same, some are not very much alike at all, and sometimes they are once again just the same" (6.1.66.22-4). This flexibility, together with the elements of pure chance and the gravity of karmic tendencies, make certain coincidences not only possible, but probable.

Midway through the round of rebirths, the text moves from dreams to deaths, and then begins to talk of them simultaneously, using the two images to illuminate one another: death is like a dream (or, rather, like an awakening), and a dream or an illusion is experienced as a kind of death. We "awaken" from ignorance, or from sleep, or from life; the same verb covers all three. Ultimately, the contrast between creatures who dream and creatures who die is exposed as being as meaningless as the contrast between one transmigrating soul or a hundred dreamt souls. Illusion and rebirth melt together from the very start, in the short poem with which the commentary introduces the whole story: "The story of Jivata is about the way in which people wrongly perceive that they have obtained various bodies; such a wrong perception operated in the mind of the monk as a result of his various karmic memory traces *(vasanas)*." (Introduction to 6.1.62.1)

For this is not just a story about rebirth, it is a story about karma. What are these karmic memory traces? In classical Indian philosophy, on which our text constantly draws, they are the bits of experience that adhere to the transmigrating soul and that predispose it to act in one way or another in its new life; they may also be experienced as inexplicable, tantalizing memories, the uneasy aftermath of a dream that has been forgotten by the conscious mind but that continues to haunt the deeper mind—the subconscious or unconscious mind, as the Freudians and Jungians would term it. It was the karmic memory traces that kept alive the knowledge that returned to the princess when she came of age, like swans returning to the Ganges in autumn. Our text tells us, for example, that after the bee had become an elephant and was then reborn as a bee, he went back to the same lotus pond where he had previously met with his unfortunate accident, "because people who are not aware of their karmic traces find it hard to give up their bad habits" (6.1.62.32). So too, when the beautiful woman becomes a doe because she envies the beauty of the doe's eyes, Rudra remarks, "Alas, the delusion that results from the karmic traces causes such misery among creatures" (6.1.63.17). All of the people in the dream-chain are reborn in a particular form because *they want something.* There is a hunger left unsated in their present lives, and this propels them across the barrier of death into a new birth, where that still unfulfilled longing leads them to do what they do. The link between dream illusions and the compulsions that make us fall again and again into the trap of rebirth is carefully forged by our text:

> One's own soul, making separate what is in fact a unity, becomes fragmented in rebirths; every single creature dies and experiences, as a separate existence, a life that is like a dream. It is not only the monk whose soul quickens from a previous life; our own living souls go from one delusion to another delusion, every day. Just as a cloud, that seems hard as a rock, is shattered on the tip of a mountain, so the living soul is shattered upon the Supreme Soul (6.1.65.3-7).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The one thing that is real—firm and hard—is the universal soul, the Godhead. The experience of the individual soul, by contrast, is entirely soft, a cloud of karmic traces. The individual soul is a dream, but there *is* something firm in the universe, something real—the universal soul of which each living soul is a fragment.

The monk is the one who understands this. He is free from the unfulfilled longings that animate the creatures of his dreams. The monk, at the top of the human hierarchy, is the point at which the dream and the rebirth converge and diverge. Rudra says that the monk was a soul that by chance became a monk; when Rudra returns to find the monk and awaken him (in the main story, before the epilogue), the monk is asleep *as if* he were a corpse; he is the dreaming soul. In the epilogue, however, when Vasishtha goes inside the story himself to find the monk, he finds only a dead body: the soul has escaped and gone back to Rudra, and the monk *is* nothing but a corpse. Thus the monk is the soul that *seems* to be born and die, though the soul is, in fact, merely dreaming, and being dreamt. The monk's story acts out the basic metaphor of the text: that what seems to be life and death is merely a dream and an awakening.

The monk's involvement in rebirth is different from that of all the other characters in Vasishtha's story (or within the monk's dream). The text insists that the monk himself was born purely "by chance" (6.1.63.9), and that he in turn became Jivata "by accident" (6.1.62.7). That is, the monk did *not* become reborn to quench a thirst, but merely dreamed of another life out of pure intellectual curiosity. He becomes Jivata merely "in play," or "for amusement" (*lilartham*, 6.1.62.5), the word for purposeless sport being the same as the one used in classical philosophical texts to describe why it is that God, who has no desires, bothers to make the universe at all. Rudra repeats that the monk indulged in pure play when he imagined Jivata (6.1.63.10-11), and it is this same spirit of pure play that leads Rudra himself to decide to travel through the universes to wake up all the figures in the monk's dream (6.1.63.36).

This is what sets the monk apart from all the others: he alone can control his mental imaging, which means both that he is not forced, willy-nilly, to become what he does not want to be (or for that matter, what he wants to be), and also that he can project his own mental images onto other minds or onto the fabric of reality itself. The text takes pains to tell us about this: it was the purity of his mind, and the powers developed in meditation, that gave him the ability to become whatever he thought of; that is, he emptied his mind of all but the one thing he wanted to become, so that he *was* nothing but that thought. The commentator is even more specific about the monk's powers: in the manner of ascetics *(yatis)*, he assumed the form of another man (Commentary on 6.1.62.6), for yogis can enter other peoples' real, existing bodies. This is a common motif in Indian folk tales.

Yet the monk is caught up, like the others, in his own imaginings; like them, he is astonished when brought face to face with the people in his dreams, and Rudra says that the monk became Jivata because of his still decaying karmic memory traces (6.1. 63.13). He experiences precisely what they all experience, even though, unlike them, he sets out to do it on purpose. Thus the introductory verse tells us that the monk was the victim of a mistaken perception *(vibhrama)* (on 6.1.62.1), for he took the people in his dream to be real and he did not, on the other hand, realize at first that he was merely part of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Rudra's dream. As soon as he wished to become someone else, his mind lost its calm, like an ocean stirred by a whirlpool (6.1.62.6). When Rudra replays the story in his own mind, he says that the monk's form changed because of the emotion that moved him at the time (6.1.63.10). Rama is puzzled by this problem, and asks Vasishtha how a monk of such spiritual distinction could be caught up in the web of delusion (6.1.65.12). Vasishtha does not answer this question specifically, but the subsequent analysis makes it clear that the monk's great degree of mental control, though temporarily swept aside by the intensity of the dream, reasserted itself, so that the monk could realize the dream of Rudra, could become awakened. Thus the commentator introduces the last chapter with this verse: "In this chapter, the body of the monk is destroyed when he has been released through his meditation, and just as the monk was first bound by and then released from his false perception, so, too, other people become bound and are released at their own awakenings." (Commentary on 6.1.67.1) The monk is part of the chain gang of rebirth, like all the rest of us, but he is first in line, and this text describes the moment when he breaks out, to set an example for all of us. For at the end of the story, the monk is described as one who has become released from the wheel of rebirth during his lifetime (6.1.67.6).

The monk is a Buddhist monk; he lives in a Buddhist monastery in a northern country called Jina, perhaps China. He is thus probably a Tibetan monk or some other sort of Mahayana monk—which is to say, a shaman and a magician. The power that he has is one that is shared by Hindu yogis as well: "By their own powers over time and space, yogis and female yogis here can stand somewhere else, wherever they wish" (6.1.64.28). The text lists other people from the annals of Hindu mythology who have had similar powers:

> While Vishnu remained asleep in the ocean of milk, he was born as a man on earth (Krishna); while Indra remains on his throne in heaven, he goes down to earth to receive the sacrifice; though Krishna was only one person, he became a thousand for the many kings who are his devotees, and for the thousands of women who were his mistresses, by indulging in the game *(lila)* of partial incarnation. In this same way, through the power of the understanding of Rudra, Jivata and the Brahmin and all the others who had been imagined by the monk went to whatever city they had imagined (6.1.66.29-34).

Even ordinary people become what they concentrate on, *volens nolens;* this is the power that drives the machine of rebirth. Extraordinary people, however, can do this on purpose, and without dying. Vishnu, Indra, Krishna, and Rudra are gods; the imaginings of gods are a thousandfold more powerful than the imaginings of yogis and monks. And Rudra (in this text, at least) is both the supreme god and the supreme yogi.

Rudra is the warp upon which we all weave our dreams; he is the fluid in which we all flow together like the particles in a suspension. He is the place where we all meet in our dreams, the infinity where our parallel lives converge. The text tells us that the lives the monk imagined could not see one another,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

living as they did in separate universes, except through the knowledge of Rudra (6.1.64.21). This last phrase is, I think, purposely ambiguous: it means that only people who know Rudra—in particular, who know that they are Rudra—can meet the people of their dreams (or meet the people that they were in their former lives and will be in their future lives). But it also means that only through the fact that *Rudra knows them* can they hope to bridge the gap between the apparently separate souls; that Rudra will show them that they are one another, because they are he. For though, as Rama points out, Rudra is merely a character in someone's dream—the monk's dream, at first, and the swan's dream, at last (6.1.69.4)—he is also the dreamer of all dreams, including the dream of the one who dreams him, the dream of the monk. Thus when the text says that Jivata lives in a universe in a corner of the mind (6.1.63.41), the immediate meaning is that it is a corner of the mind of the monk. But as the tale unfolds we come to understand that the monk himself exists only in the corner of another mind, Rudra's mind. Moreover, where the monk merely dreams of Rudra, Rudra produces the monk in a more direct fashion: the monk is a partial incarnation of Rudra, an atom flowing in the veins of Rudra. Rudra is "made of" Jivata and the others, the text says.

Thus our story takes place on three levels of thought that are also three levels of existence. We begin on the most obvious level, with our assumption that dreams are basically different from reality; on this level animals actually change from one form to another when they die. Mind and matter are distinct; though they may interact and influence one another, they are made of different stuff. On the middle level, we encounter the possibility of transforming mind into matter and matter into mind; here is the level where people dream, or think, about assuming another form, and so assume it. This middle level has two subdivisions: truly enlightened people, who understand that mind and matter are not essentially different things, may intentionally use their minds to bring about a change in the forms of matter—or rather, an apparent change; while those who are not truly enlightened are forced to undergo what they think to be real changes of form, though these changes too are merely apparent. Finally, on the highest level, we find the undifferentiated substance that always is both mind and matter, that underlies both the apparent changes of material form and the less obvious transmutations that mental forces exert upon apparent matter. On this level, we realize that nothing ever changes into anything else, that everything was there all along, and everything was, for want of a better word, God all along.

Despite Rudra's extraordinary ontological status, his actual mental processes are flawed like those of even the best of his dream creatures, the monk. The monk, who unknowingly imitates Rudra's "play" *(lila)*, begins dispassionately enough, but as soon as he imagines a person with passions (the earthy Jivata), he is caught up in those passions himself, forced to follow the game into realms he had not intended to explore. So too Rudra is caught up in his own sport; he is "amazed" to see what creatures people the brave new world of his imagination. He too has karmic residues—more than anyone else, since he experiences *everyone's* lives.[18] Though he is the mold that cuts the forms, those forms also create themselves, beyond his control, once the process is set in motion. Like the monk, Rudra discovers that creation inevitably leads to imperfection, to the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

self-perpetuating desire to go on creating. Like the monk, Rudra indulges his frivolity, his creative urge. Even Rudra, then, is not a true model of freedom from karma; not even Rudra can remain deaf to the songs of the sirens he imagines.

For "pure" play does not remain pure for long. When Rudra acts "for the sake of play/sport/amusement/fun," or "for the sheer hell of it" *(lilartham)*, we might also translate the term, "art for art's sake." This same "art" is implicit in the word usually translated as "illusion," *maya*, which may be related to the Sanskrit verb "to make" *(ma)*. *Maya* is what Rudra "makes" (or "finds") when he imagines the universe; *maya* is his art. To say that the universe is an illusion is not to say that it is unreal; it is to say that it is not what it seems to be, that it is something constantly being *made*. Similar concepts cluster together in English around the derivatives of the Latin word for play (*ludo*, as in delusion, illusion, and so forth) and around the word "play" itself (play as drama, as swordplay, as the play of light that causes mirages, as the ambiguity and double image implicit in wordplay).[19] These word clusters delineate a universe full of beauty and motion that enchants us all. Yet *maya* is often associated with evil in Indian texts, for it is the trick of the mind that causes us to become, literally, deadly serious about what begins in a spirit of play. *Maya* is what makes us dream, and die.

Caillois concludes his essay with a speculation about the playfulness of the dream of God, from a Western point of view:

> The most rugged of theologians, in every period and of every persuasion, those who have dared to venture to the brink of the dizzy precipice of metaphysics, those who are mathematically cool and precise, have all agreed in assuming (one might say unanimously) that the relation between God and the world is like that which an all-powerful Spirit—a spirit that has no need to use its power, that scorns to impose its will, absentminded, impish, overgenerous—has with its Dream (solely through an excess of excellence), without even being aware of it. The Dream is the unfathomable, the inscrutable Universe that He lets emanate from Himself, a heedless and needless fantasy, perhaps.[20]

India provides a challenge to the "unanimity" of this theological view, for it sees the dream of Rudra as one that he becomes aware of, and one that is not "needless" once it has begun, though it might have been needless at the very beginning of the game.

If Rudra is thus caught in his own coils, is there no one who is impervious, safe, out of bounds? There seems to be one: Vasishtha. Like the monk and Rudra, he is able to make his dreams come true, and not merely his dreams, but even his conscious didactic examples. Moreover, Vasishtha is not amazed at the things that happen in his story, not even at the fact that his story turns out to be true. He creates not out of idle curiosity or even a spirit of playfulness, but to teach Rama a lesson. Unlike the Brahmin in the monk's dream, who, although a Brahmin, was not a particularly subtle theologian or accomplished sage, Vasishtha knows all the answers; he alone never seems to be fooled.

Vasishtha is the key to the paradox of the dreamer dreamt. The tale of the monk involved us in what Douglas Hofstadter has called a Strange Loop or a Tangled Hierarchy.[21] Each dream seems to be nested inside another, until, when we encounter the final, innermost dream, it is identified with the

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

outermost dream: Rudra is the monk who is dreaming about Rudra. What we thought was a spiral turns out to be a kind of Moebius strip, which bends in on itself forever. This bothers Rama: "How could a hundred Rudras be made by Rudra who was himself made in someone's dream?" Tangled hierarchies of this sort abound in logic, as a special kind of paradox of which perhaps the most famous is the self-referential paradox of Epimenides, the Cretan who stated, "All Cretans are liars." Lewis Carroll, who was fascinated by paradoxes of this sort, dramatized the same one that animated the tale of the monk's dream: Alice dreams that the Red King dreams of her. In visual form, such tangled hierarchies appear in the etchings of Escher, such as "Drawing Hands": a hand draws a picture of a hand that draws the first hand.[22] In literature and art, these paradoxes can be "solved," if one cheats by stepping back out of the frame altogether, to what Hofstadter calls the "inviolate level." The answer to Lewis Carroll's question, "Who dreamed the dream?" is, "Lewis Carroll," and it is Escher who drew the hands. In our Hindu myth, we are tempted to step back in rhythm with all the other characters who leap from frame to frame: we move from Rudra who is dreamt by the swan (who is dreamt by the goose . . . who is dreamt by Jivata) to the monk who is imagined by Vasishtha who is a character in a book (the *Yogavasishtha*) that is attributed to the poet Valmiki, whose work has been translated into English by me and is now being read by someone in *Daedalus*. When we reach Vasishtha, we think we have reached the inviolate level—but this turns out to be only the first of several such levels.

I began this analysis by likening the story of the man who met the people in his dreams to the stories of Henny-Penny and The House That Jack Built. These are cumulative tales, and indeed, that is what our story seems to be at first, up to the point where we end up with all the characters crowded together. But as we look deeper, we see that the structure is not linear but concentric, that the tale is not cumulative, but nested, with causative, interlocking links that must be unraveled, not merely unpiled.[23] So too we can at first depict the line of transmission on the "inviolate" level as a straight line: Vasishtha to Valmiki (in a manner parallel to the transmission from Socrates to Plato) to O'Flaherty to *Daedalus* reader. But one of the things that the story teaches us is that the frame can always pull back from what seems its natural resting place to reveal yet another level within which it is nested. And finally, we must consider the possibility that that outer level is in fact identical with one of the levels that we had considered to be inside, or farther down the linear sequence. If we apply this twist to the "inviolate" line of transmission, we must draw at least a dotted line from our putative ultimate point (the *Daedalus* reader) back to Rudra (Figure 1), implying that Rudra is dreaming of us, the readers.

We may avoid being tricked into accepting the involuted twist in Vasishtha's story, the moment when the monk leads us back to Rudra, back once more into the secret heart of the labyrinth from which the characters in the story can never escape. But have we escaped after all? I think not. Vasishtha experiences doubts about the monk's nonexistence, and so he cannot resist acting in his own play, just like the monk and Rudra. Authors are caught up in their stories; and so are readers. If Vasishtha can plunge into the page and come face to face with the monk in his own story, as Rudra can go into his dream and wake up the people who are dreaming him, we cannot rest confident in our assumption that *our*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

level of the story is the final "inviolate" level. If there *is* one inviolate level, it is the level of the Godhead, the impersonal continuum beyond even Rudra. This is the level of the universal soul, the source of all mental images that assume material form. For though monks and great sages and poets and gods can project themselves into physical bodies whenever they want to, all of us—princes and harlots and bees and professors—helplessly spin, out of our desires, the lives that we have inherited from our former selves. Sooner or later, our dreams do become real, whether we want them to or not, whether they are nightmares or wishes that we long to have fulfilled. The difference between most of us and Indian sages like Vasishtha is that we are unaware of our dreams, unaware of our repeated lives, or rather, unwilling to accept the disquieting, but challenging, possibility that the former lives and dreams may be as real, or unreal, as our waking experiences and thoughts.

References

[1]The present article forms a part of my work in progress, *Myths about Dreams about the Creation of Illusions about Reality*. A portion of it was given as the 1982 Foerster Lecture on the Immortality of the Soul, in Berkeley, on March 8, 1982, and another portion as one of the Mead-Swing Lectures at Oberlin College on March 25, 1982. I am grateful to the University of California at Berkeley and to Oberlin College for permission to reproduce the lectures here in an expanded form.

[2]*Theaetetus* 157E-158E.

[3]In addition to the overall dream structure of the two Alice books, Carroll describes the encounter between Alice and the Red King who is, she is told, dreaming of her. As Martin Gardner remarks on this passage, "The Berkeleyan theme troubled Carroll as it troubles all Platonists." In *The Annotated Alice* (New York: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 238.

[4]Roger Caillois, "Logical and Philosophical Problems of the Dream," in *The Dream and Human Societies*, edited by G. E. von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), pp. 33-35. The stories of the dream adventure appear in *The Dream Adventure*, edited by Roger Caillois (New York: 1963).

[5]See, for example, "The Circular Ruins," in *Labyrinths* (New York: Penguin, 1970), pp. 72-77.

[6]My favorite example of this genre in the fiction of Eliade is "Nights at Serampore," in *Two Tales of the Occult* (New York: 1970), pp. 1-60.

[7]Caillois, "Logical and Philosophical Problems," p. 46.

[8]The text I have used is the *Yogavasishthamaharamayana* of Valmiki, with the commentary *Vasishthamaharamayanatatparyaprakasha*, 2 volumes, edited by W. L. S. Pansikar (Bombay: Nirnaya Sagara Press, 1918).

[9]Cf. C. R. Sarma, *The Ramayana in Telugu and Tamil* (Madras: 1973). A variant of one of the tales from the *Yogavasishtha* was recorded by John Hinton Knowles in Kashmir in 1893; another variant of the same tale was told to me in August 1980, in Mysore, by Mrs. Lalita Handoo, who heard it from her great-aunt in Kashmir.

[10]All subsequent parenthetical citations are from this source.

[11]Stith Thompson, *Motif Index of Folk Literature*, revised edition, 6 volumes, (Bloomington, Indiana: 1955-58), motif D 2041.5, volume 2, p. 308.

[12]For the construction of lives as *bricolage*, see my essay "Inside and Outside the Mouth of God: The Boundary between Myth and Reality," which appeared in the Spring 1980 issue of *Daedalus*, pp. 93-125.

[13]For the argument that common sense is a cultural construct that differs in different times and places, see "Common Sense as a Cultural System" by Clifford Geertz, which appeared in *Antioch Review*, volume 33, 1975, pp. 5-26.

[14]I am indebted to David Shulman for the formulation of this paragraph, and to A. K. Ramanujan for the suggestion that everyone makes the distinction between the real and the unreal, somewhere along a shifting continuum.

[15]*Kumarasambhava* 1.30.

[16]*Bhagavata Purana* 4.28.51-64.

[17]For the tale of Gadhi the Brahmin, see my "Illusion and Reality in the *Yogavasishtha*, or, The Scientific Proof of Mythical Experience," in the Spring 1981 issue of *Quadrant*, pp. 46-65.

[18]For the karma of the gods, see my *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), pp. 23-27.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

[19]Jan Huizinga's *Homo Ludens* is the definitive discussion of this theme.
[20]Caillois, "Logical and Philosophical Problems," p. 52.
[21]Douglas R. Hofstadter, *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid* (New York: Basic Books, 1979; and Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 686-92.
[22]See Ibid., p. 690, for Hofstadter's analysis of this drawing.
[23]I am indebted to Alan Dundes for this distinction between cumulative and nesting tales.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

DAVID SCOTT KASTAN

Shakespeare and "The Way of Womenkind"

In spite of the presence of a woman on the throne, Elizabethan Protestants heard in "The Homily on Matrimony" a clear assertion of male supremacy: "The woman is a weak creature not endowed with like strength of mind; therefore, they be the sooner disquieted, and they be the more prone to all weak affections and dispositions of mind, more than men be; and lighter they be, and more vain in their fantasies and opinions."[1] In Shakespeare's comedies, however, women are neither weak nor vain. The logic of romantic comedy demands women whose "strength and constancy of mind" at least equal the mental qualities of the men they love, and characters like Rosalind, Beatrice, and Portia are able and willing to participate fully in the function of marriage that the age increasingly recognized. To the Church's grudging Pauline approval of marriage as a "remedie against sinne," the Prayer Book of 1549 added as a motive for matrimony "mutuall societie, helpe and coumfort."[2] The "triumphant women"[3] of the comedies, as Ellen Terry called them, desire and deserve the "mutuall societie" that marriage might offer. Their energy, intelligence, and resilience permit the realization and authentication of love's triumph—that is, permit comedy to be comedy.

The comedies reflect the growing acknowledgment of spiritual and emotional intimacy as a goal for marriage, and they resist the pressure of Protestant thought that a woman's proper role was docile and domestic. Theologians regularly echoed Luther's notion that "women should remain at home, sit still, keep house, and bear and bring up children,"[4] but the plays present us with witty and resolute women who are neither inferior nor subordinate to the men they love.

In other genres in which Shakespeare works, however, the possibilities and consequences of womanhood are problematic. In the histories' turbulent world of political contention, women struggle to find a legitimate place, and they discover at last that the drama of power, in Moody Prior's phrase,[5] offers them only bit parts to play. Women grace the stage, in the first tetralogy, gaudily dressed in the trappings of nobility, but they painfully learn that power conferred and confirmed only in terms of the social rank and authority of the males associated with them is no power at all. "Am I queen in title and in style," asks Margaret, "And must be made subject to a duke?" (*2 Henry VI*, I.iii.48-49), and in a world where a woman's title and style derive from a noble husband or

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

father, the answer must be, "Yes." Finally, in *Richard III*, Margaret sees clearly, as Elizabeth before her, that alone she is

> a breath, a bubble,
> a queen in jest, only to fill the scene.
>
> (IV.iv.90-91)

Another Elizabeth would be queen in fact, but for the women of the histories, interest and participation in the traditional masculine arenas of politics and warfare are impossible. "These are no women's matters," says Gloucester, (*3 Henry VI*, I. iii.117), and what things are "women's matters" allow little scope for female energy and intelligence. A woman who ventures down the corridors of power is considered unnatural, no woman at all.[6] Condemning Margaret as a "she-wolf," an "Amazonian trull," York claims that

> Women are soft, mild, pitiful, flexible;
> Thou stern, obdurate, flinty, rough, remorseless.
>
> (I.iv.141-42)

But if to be a women is to be "soft, mild, pitiful, flexible," it is to be never other than subordinate, unworthy of full participation in the world of politics and power.

In the first tetralogy, women try to claim a place in the masculine world. Not only Margaret, but notably Joan de Pucelle and the Countess of Auvergne reject the stereotypical, feminine attributes that a patriarchal culture values as convenient in its subordinates. Each is brave and assertive, willing to enter into the arenas of power, and each is French and treacherous (and, of course, female—three adjectives virtually synonymous). Dramatically and emotionally, the challenge to male supremacy is discredited, identified entirely with the challenge to English virtue and national integrity.

"The monstruous regiment of women,"[7] in John Knox's phrase, must be defeated, and women returned to their usual sphere, merely adjunct to power. By the end of *3 Henry VI*, women hold their authority only as the wives of men of influence, and in *Richard III*, the women discover that their ancillary role offers neither protection nor power.[8] Margaret, Elizabeth, and the Duchess will each "die neither mother, wife, nor England's Queen" (I.iii.208), and each is left only to curse and mourn. *Richard III* ends, of course, with mention of another woman, the young Elizabeth, whose "fair conjunction" with Richmond will bring to an end the "dire division" of York and Lancaster. Yet, though Richmond looks to a future of peace and prosperity to be enjoyed by their "heirs," Elizabeth herself is not present on stage. She may well succeed as mother, wife, and England's queen, but her absence from the joyful ending insists that these roles be secondary in the masculine world of the histories.

In the second tetralogy, women are even less central than in the first. Richard's wife is not more than "a weeping queen" (*Richard II*, III.iv.107), burdened by "the heavy thought of care" (III.iv.2). Lady Percy, Lady Mortimer, Northumberland's wife, Mistress Quickly, and Doll Tearsheet are the only women who appear, even briefly, on the crowded canvas of the *Henry IV* plays; and in *Henry V*, we see only Mistress Quickly, Isabel, Katherine, and her attendant. As the second tetralogy ends, even the wedding that might promise a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

vital place for a woman, as it promises healing and harmony, reveals itself as the servant of the masculine will to power. Henry knows that "nice customs curtsy to great kings" (V.ii.260), and in the final scene, he would have the nice custom of royal marriage celebrate and guarantee his conquest. Katherine wonders, "Is it possible dat I sould love de ennemie of France," and Henry replies truthfully:

> No, it is not possible that you should love
> the enemy of France, Kate; but in loving
> me you should love the friend of France, for
> I love France so well that I will not part
> with a village of it—I will have it all mine.
>
> (V.ii.167-71)

Henry is content for Kate to be his wife, as he says imperiously to her father, "so the maiden cities you talk of may wait on her. So that maid that stood in the way for my wish shall show me the way to my will" (V.ii.312-14). Henry's will is to have France all his, and the territorial drive is too naked for the promised wedding to authenticate the harmony it would effect. This is not a comedy, but a history. As prince, Henry could "drink with any tinker in his own language" (*1 Henry IV*, II.iv.17), but as king, he cannot speak with his intended wife in hers.

The fructive and nurturing role of women in the second tetralogy is taken over by England itself. The banished Bolingbroke speaks of England as "my mother and my nurse" (*Richard II*, I.iii.307); his father, as a "teeming womb of royal kings" (II.i.51). England's sons, however, turn against each other, betraying the mother country, and the "intestine" wars "daub her lips with her own children's blood" (*1 Henry IV*, I.i.6).

What might truly nourish has no place in the world of the histories. Women are marginal, as Kate Percy's experience makes clear. Certainly, her lively intelligence and loving concern are neither unnatural nor unattractive, yet she has neither a political nor an emotional place in Hotspur's world. She recognizes his anxiety and urges him to share his thoughts with her:

> Tell me, sweet lord, what is't that takes from thee
> Thy stomach, pleasure, and thy golden sleep.
>
> (II.iii.37-38)

Hotspur's love, however, does not extend deep enough to permit him to share with her the intimacies of his heart and mind.

> I must not have you henceforth question me
> Wither I go, nor reason whereabout. . . .
> I know you wise, but yet no farther wise than
> Harry Percy's wife; constant you are
> But yet a woman . . .
>
> (II.iii.99-104)

The double-bind for women asserts itself: to be a woman in this world is to be "soft, mild, pitiful, flexible," but to be thus is to be inadequate for the activities the society most highly values. Kate has a place only as "Harry Percy's wife," and will not even be allowed to play that role fully. For Hotspur, human

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

excellence is defined and tested only in traditionally masculine terms and arenas.

> Sound all the lofty instruments of war
> And by that music let us all embrace.
>
> (V.iv.97-98)

But that "all" is misleading. Kate and all women are excluded from that embrace. Other instruments, we sense, might have played a sweeter tune.

Portia, in *Julius Caesar*, almost has Kate's identical experience, in large part because Brutus is Hotspur writ large.[9] Both men, champions of abstractions, are committed to standards of human excellence that deny them access to the richness of an interior life. Like Hotspur, Brutus—as even Antony sees—has a nobility unique in the conspiracy.

> All the conspirators save only he
> Did that they did in envy of great Caesar;
> He, only in a general honest thought
> And common good to all, made one of them.
>
> (V.v.69-72)

His "general honest thought," however, is not deep enough or tough enough to keep him from the self-deception that leads to the conspiracy's ultimate failure.[10] He never gives full voice to his misgivings, never tests his principles or has them tested, except in the unforgiving mill of history.

He has the opportunity for such a test before he is unconditionally committed to his course, but he refuses it, or rather, takes it up only when it is too late. Portia begs him, "Make me acquainted with your cause of grief" (ii.i.256), insistently parries his efforts to dismiss her concern, and finally kneels before him invoking their "vows of love" to enlist his trust:

> Am I your self
> But as it were in sort or limitation?
> To keep with you at meals, comfort your bed,
> And talk to you sometimes? Dwell I but in the suburbs
> Of your good pleasure? If it be no more,
> Portia is Brutus' harlot, not his wife.
>
> (II.i.282-87)

She recognizes and anticipates his resistance:

> I grant I am a woman; but withal
> A woman that Lord Brutus took to wife.
> I grant I am a woman; but withal
> A woman well-reputed, Cato's daughter.
>
> (II.i.294-97)

If only for Brutus, she defines her worth in terms of her connections to males, and Brutus is persuaded. He is moved by her appeal, but the entrance of the conspirators commands his attention.

> One knocks. Portia, go in awhile,
> And by and by thy bosom shall partake
> The secrets of my heart.
>
> (II.i.304-6)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The momentum of the conspiracy takes over, and never again do Brutus and Portia have a private moment together. He never shares with her the secrets of his heart. He leaves her dwelling in "the suburbs" of his good pleasure, denying both of them the potential nourishment of their love. Rome is the city, the vital center of his existence, and his commitment to Rome ends by devastating Portia, Brutus, and Rome itself.

Brutus and Hotspur—rebels both—never find ways of restoring the order they destroy, and each pays for his failure with his life. In the history plays, that price is high enough, and Kate survives to wail her dead. In the tragedy, the price is greater. Portia herself becomes a casualty of a world that banishes women to the suburbs of its vital interests.

In this difference, we discover something essential about Shakespeare's idea of the difference between history and tragedy. After all Hotspur's efforts to parry Kate's concern about his "heavy business," he consoles her with the news that she will be able to follow him the next day. "Will this content you, Kate?" he asks. "It must of force," replies Kate realistically (II.iii.113). Portia, however, is not content. Endowed, she says, "with a man's mind but a woman's might" (II.iv.8), she struggles to find a way to be other than a follower, other than a passive onlooker. She tries to demonstrate her worth to Brutus, first, as we've seen, by asserting her connections with a noble husband and father, and then by invoking a literally self-destructive idea of valor:

> I have made strong proof of my constancy,
> Giving myself a voluntary wound
> Here, in the thigh. Can I bear that with patience
> And not my husband's secrets?
>
> (II.i.299-302)

But when such "proof" does nothing to relieve her secondary status, her impotence leads her beyond self-mutilation to suicide. In this world, a "woman's might" can only be turned against herself.

In the histories, we see the exclusion of women from the centers of power and value; in the tragedies, we learn the full human cost. In the histories, women are marginal; in the tragedies, they are destroyed. Portia kills herself when she discovers she has no means of translating her love and concern into anything more effective than the impatience and grief that destroy her. Kept from acting in the world, she withdraws from it entirely.

What the tragedies show that the histories do not is that the cost of this wastage is levied not only upon the women. Brutus manages to "endure" Portia's loss with chilling calm. Her death distracts him from his purpose no more than her life:

> Well, to our work alive. What do you think
> Of marching to Philippi presently?
>
> (IV.iii.196-97)

Yet precisely this inadequacy in his emotional life ensures the inadequacy of his political vision. He has so little understanding of human need and desire, that he knows the people of Rome as little as he knows himself.

Brutus never understands what might give him the vital self-knowledge he lacks. Cassius offers himself as a "glass" that

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Will modestly discover to yourself
> That of yourself which you know not of.
>
> (I.ii.69-70)

But Cassius's mirror does not provide a true reflection. It flatters Brutus, seducing him from his own best interest. Portia, however, might have served him better. She invokes "that great vow / Which did incorporate and make us one" (II.i.272-73); but for Brutus, marriage is but one more of the abstractions that he embraces. A man who thinks in terms of "shows of love" (I.ii.47) rather than love itself is dangerously alienated from any authentic emotional conviction, and Portia is denied access to the one arena in which she might have functioned with power and purpose. For her, the cost of this denial is hideous, but for Brutus—and for Rome—it is no less. Having taken the vow that did "make [them] one," Brutus without Portia is but half a person—who can make neither himself nor his country whole.

Wholeness is always the goal that tragedy frustrates, and love increasingly becomes both its symbol and source. Love in the tragedies is always fragile, as Laertes warns Ophelia. It is, he says,

> A violet in the youth of primy nature,
> Forward, not permanent, sweet, not lasting,
> The perfume and suppliance of a minute,
> No more.
>
> (*Hamlet*, I.iii.7-10)

But in *Hamlet*, this is in large part self-fulfilling prophecy. Laertes and Polonius make Ophelia fearful, force her to choose between her love for Hamlet and for her family, paralyzing her, destroying her. If love is but a violet, still it is preferable to the weeds that do flourish, but perhaps even the violet is hardier than they suspect. They fear that Hamlet's "will is not his own" (I.iii.16), that concerns of state will dictate a political marriage. Gertrude, however, reveals that he might have given "his saying deed" (I.iii.27):

> I hoped thou should'st have been my Hamlet's wife.
> I thought thy bride-bed to have decked, sweet maid,
> And not have strewed thy grave.
>
> (V.i.231-33)

But love fails, as it always does in tragedy. The potentially life-giving union of Hamlet and Ophelia gives way to a death-dealing "union" (V.ii.261), as Claudius calls the pearl that drops into the wine. A poisoning pearl, symbol and symptom of the diseased society of Denmark, triumphs in place of—and over—the love that might regenerate it.

The violet of love fails to regenerate the unweeded garden of Denmark. It fails as male and female act out their destructive, culturally determined roles. Ophelia reveals the passivity and powerlessness of women subject to masculine will and authority; Hamlet, the distrust and disloyalty of the male who is at once attracted to, and disgusted by, female sexuality.[11] Each is betrayed, and each is a betrayer. Ophelia denies Hamlet all "access" to her, allows herself to be used as bait in one of Polonius's "springs," and finally falls victim to a

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

paralysis of will so extreme, that it is not clear that she even chooses her death. Hamlet too denies their love, turning viciously on her, generalizing his pathological disgust with his mother's conduct, and taking refuge in the emotionally reductive and morally inadequate role of revenger.

Certainly Ophelia is a victim.[12] More than Hamlet's, her will is not her own. She is the one who truly cannot "carve" for herself. With no mother, she exists entirely in a world of predatory males, who retard and do not respect her growth, males who nonetheless arrogate to themselves her instruction. "I will teach you," says Polonius; "Think yourself a baby . . ." (I.iii.105). Laertes, unasked and smug, warns her against Hamlet's love: "Fear it, Ophelia, my dear Sister" (I.iii.33). Polonius tells her directly, "Do not believe his vows" (I.iii.127), and orders her not "to give words or talk with the Lord Hamlet" (I.iii.134). In the face of this assault upon her judgment and her sense of self, she has little choice. "I shall obey, my Lord," she meekly answers (I.iii.136).

But Hamlet too is a victim—not only, as Ophelia, a victim of her family's warnings, but also the victim of a ghost who walks the night and pours a poison in his ear as lethal as that which Claudius poured in old Hamlet's. From the ghost he inherits his discomfort with sexual desire. Though he himself has been disturbed by the speed of his mother's remarriage, the ghost focuses his attention on the sexual betrayal. The ghost, who asks only that his murder be revenged, returns almost obsessively to Gertrude's crime:

> If thou has nature in thee, bear it not.
> Let not the royal bed of Denmark be
> A couch for luxury and damned incest.
>
> (I.v.81-83)

On the word of the ghost, Hamlet commits himself totally to revenge, never hearing the oddity of the charge: "Howsomever thou pursues this act / Taint not thy mind" (I.v.84-85). Hamlet instantly commits himself to the ghost's will:

> from the table of my memory
> I'll wipe away all trivial fond records,
> All saws of books, all forms, all pressures past
> That youth and observation copied there,
> And thy commandment all alone shall live
> Within the book and volume of my brain,
> Unmixed with baser matter.
>
> (I.v.98-104)

Such a man who so easily will "wipe away" all he has previously felt and known has had his mind already tainted.

Hamlet's rejection of Ophelia cuts him off from the only source of sanity and health that the court of Denmark offers, and of course it devastates her. Where Brutus claims to love Portia but ignores her, in the developing emotional logic of the tragedies, Hamlet cruelly denies his love and would exile Ophelia from his world: "Go thy ways to a nunnery" (III.i.129-30).

The pattern is a recurring one in the tragedies where women are charged with betrayal and banished. Othello improbably comes to see Desdemona as "that cunning whore of Venice" (IV.ii.89), and laments: "Ah Desdemon! away! away! away!" (IV.ii.42); and Lear turns Cordelia into his "sometime daughter"

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

(I.i.120), literally banishing her from Britain: "Hence and avoid my sight" (I.i.124).

In *Othello*, both Desdemona and the Moor are outsiders, and they and their love finally succumb to the prejudices of their world. Othello always knows himself to be marginal, other, alien. He becomes central only in times of crisis (and it is instructive that he is replaced as governor on Cyprus almost immediately after the Turkish threat disappears). If he believes Iago rather than Desdemona, it is because at some deep level he is incapable of believing that she could love him. He, not Iago, first suggests that her love may be not only undeserved, but unnatural. "And yet, how nature erring from itself—" he muses; and Iago pounces: "Ay, there's the point!" (III.iii.226-27).

Desdemona suffers in the same way. At the beginning of the play, she is hardly Brabantio's "maiden never bold" (I.iii.94); she is aggressive, sensible, and articulate.[13] Yet under the horrific pressures of Cyprus, where she is betrayed even by Emilia, she reverts to the passivity she was bred for. Only then does she take refuge in the helpless innocence of her last days, when she "cannot say 'whore' " (IV.ii.161) or fight for her life.

Othello destroys what he most needs and desires. Desdemona is "the fountain from the which my current runs / Or else dries up" (IV.ii.59-60), and "to be discarded thence" is to be cut off from the very wellspring of life and value. Of course, he has not in fact been "discarded," and the tragedy is that he, once willing to offer "my life upon her faith" (I.iii.294), backs off from the life-giving wager. With terrible irony, *her* life hinges on *his* faith, and his faith fails in the face of his own doubts and fears.

Only at the end does he acknowledge his guilt, and only then can he recognize Desdemona's innocence. His final act becomes a grotesque effort to reestablish the relationship he has severed.[14]

> I kissed thee ere I killed thee. No way but this,
> Killing myself, to die upon a kiss.
>
> (V.ii.358-59)

In the comic world, better ways exist to "die upon a kiss." Comedy will activate the sexual pun in the drive towards love's triumph, but in tragedy there is "no way but this."

Too late the male agonists of the tragedies discover their errors and what Lear calls their "true need" (II.iv.265), and like Othello, they find desperate gestures to express their now useless knowledge. Hamlet leaps into Ophelia's grave and only then declares: "I loved Ophelia" (V.i.256); Lear enters with Cordelia dead in his arms, howling in inarticulate fury against the slaughter of the innocent, only now fully knowing her value and his loss.

Macbeth perhaps seems anomalous in this catalogue of tragic actions, yet in fact the play, even as it rings changes on the familiar pattern, confirms its shape and intensifies its implications. Certainly, Lady Macbeth is not passive, and Macbeth, unlike the men in the other tragedies, does not dismiss her. He shares with her his thoughts, recognizing her as his "dearest partner in greatness" (I.v.10-11). As an actress, Ellen Terry understood this well. "The relation between them is not that of master and subject," she wrote. "They are on the terms of equals."[15] Lady Macbeth has more in common with the witty heroines

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

of the comedies than the doomed victims of the tragedies. Like a Rosalind or a Portia, she is able to challenge effectively Macbeth's idea of manhood, and his ability to change might suggest that this marriage represents the active, creative love, the "mutual render," as Sonnet 125 has it, that has been missing from the tragedies.

But the same conditions that create the possibility of love's triumph here ensure its failure. Lady Macbeth does challenge Macbeth's understanding of what it means to be a man, but instead of forcing a reevaluation of the culture's code that merges violence and valor, she substitutes an even more virulent form of that code. Macbeth's "daring," controlled by his acknowledgment of some principles of behavior that are transgressed only at the cost of one's humanity, is freed by her combination of sexual promise and sexual taunt, and he is "settled" in a ferocious version of manhood that isolates him from all human comfort and community.[16]

Her successful assault on her husband's attitudes and values is a perverse version of a comic pattern. Like the comic heroines who are able to free males to rethink what Marilyn French has called "the ordinary wisdom of the male world,"[17] she divests herself of her femininity. In the comedies, however, this act is merely superficial. Male clothing offers the disguised heroines of the comedies the safety and the scope denied women for effective action. Lady Macbeth adopts no disguise. She would have her very being divested of its "feminine" qualities:

> Come, you Spirits
> That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
> And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
> Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
> Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
> That no compunctious visitings of nature
> Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
> Th' effect and it.
>
> (I.v.38-45)

She would deny her emotionally nurturing and morally sensitive tendencies, herself effecting the banishment that in other tragedies is exclusively the act of a faithless male.

Lady Macbeth champions an ideal of manhood that excludes compassion and moral concern, sanctioning action and power as the only valid criteria of human excellence; and ironically, her success insures that she loses her place as Macbeth's "partner of greatness." The savage masculinity that she urges denies human relatedness, and in making him "more the man," she insures that she will seem unworthy of the partnership. They plan and complete the murder of Duncan in tandem. (Indeed, there is an odd complementarity to their actions, as they are able to coordinate their alternations of fear and resolve to allow the execution of the deed.) The plans for dealing with Banquo and Fleance are Macbeth's own. "What's to be done?" asks Lady Macbeth. "Be innocent of the knowledge, dearest chuck," Macbeth replies, "Til thou applaud the deed" (III.ii.44-45).

As Macbeth increasingly turns to the witches for comfort and knowledge, Lady Macbeth fades from view, appearing for the final time in her sleepwalk-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ing. Here she reveals that she has not been unsexed as she wished. She has never entirely been able to deny the human bonds she would cancel. She is unable to kill Duncan when she comes upon him sleeping: "Had he not resembled / My father as he slept, I had done't" (II.i.12-13). In her "slumb'ry agitation" (V.i.11), she displays the guilt she earlier mocks in Macbeth. After the murder she is confident that "a little water clears us of this deed" (II.ii.66), but now "all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand" (V.i.47-48). Her final words voice her desire for the relatedness she has denied: "Give me your hand! What's done cannot be undone. To bed, to bed, to bed" (V.i.62-63). Her "infected" mind will not be cured, and she dies, ironically mourned only by a "cry of women" (V.v.8).

Unlike the other tragedies, however, the death does not release the knowledge of true need and value; rather, it occasions only Macbeth's vision that life has no value at all. "She should have died hereafter," he offers (V.v.17), but grief is beyond him now. Life has become "a tale / Told by an idiot . . . / Signifying nothing" (V.v.26-28); yet if their tale signifies nothing, it does so only because both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth embrace a defective ideal of manhood that empties life of emotional and moral meaning, a diminished and destructive ideal that only lights "the way to dusty death" (V.v.23).

It becomes arguable that, for Shakespeare, tragedy is tragedy because love fails, because male and female are unable to make meaningful "the vows of love" that, as Portia says, would "incorporate and make us one." Only in *Antony and Cleopatra* is the pattern different. Here, the lovers are "a mutual pair" (I.i.37), who ultimately reject the historical world that Caesar controls, and commit themselves to an emotional realm that they alone dominate. They face their deaths not with admissions of defeat, but with assertions of victory:

> Where souls do couch on flowers, we'll hand in hand,
> And with our sprightly port make the ghosts gaze:
> Dido and her Aeneas shall want troops,
> And all the haunt be ours.
>
> (IV.xiv.51-54)

The similarities to the pattern of the other tragedies as well as the differences are instructive. Antony is another of the tragic heroes who believes himself betrayed and who would banish from this world the woman he has loved:

> This foul Egyptian hath betrayed me. . . .
> Ah, thou spell! Avaunt! . . .
> Vanish, or I shall give thee thy deserving
> And blemish Caesar's triumph.
>
> (IV.xii.10,30,32-33)

But unlike the other tragedies, here the woman is guilty of the charge. Cleopatra's fleet does desert, as earlier her ships "fly and turn the rudder" (III.x.3), and Antony is "beguiled . . . to the very heart of loss" (IV.xii.29). But so often in the play, apparent loss is actually gain, and apparent gain, loss. Antony's military and political defeat leads him to establish rule over "new heaven, new earth" (I.i.17), as he discovers new standards of value by which Cleopatra appears "a lass unparalleled" (V.ii.315), and Caesar, merely an "ass Unpolicied" (V.ii.306-7).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

"Not know me yet?" Cleopatra wonders (III.xiii.157), as Antony rages in jealousy, but with the false news of her death, he does know her and knows his course. From demanding her death, he instantly promises his own:

> I will o'ertake thee, Cleopatra, and
> Weep for my pardon.
>
> (IV.xiv.44-45)

In death, he will make the total commitment he cannot make in life. No longer is he caught between two worlds. He would be "a bridegroom in [his] death" (IV.xiv.100), married now to Cleopatra instead of to Roman wives and Roman values.

This recalls, of course, the actions of other tragic figures, like Hamlet announcing, "I loved Ophelia," as he stands by her grave, making the saving commitment only when it is too late to matter, a commitment that serves bitterly as an index of what has been betrayed. Here, however, there is a mutuality the other tragedies lack. Cleopatra completes the ceremony, announcing as she dies: "Husband I come" (V.ii.286). Egypt's queen becomes in death wife and mother.

> Didst thou not see my baby at my breast,
> That sucks the nurse asleep?
>
> (V.ii.308-9)

Lady Macbeth would turn her mother's milk into gall; Cleopatra turns the asp's gall into mother's milk.

The lovers imaginatively convert their tragedy into comedy as they discover that they are willing, if not to live for each other, at least so to die. Neither is, of course, absolute for death, but each knows that life without the other is meaningless. For Antony, with Cleopatra dead, "all length is torture" (IX.xiv.46), and Cleopatra asks:

> Noblest of men, woo't die?
> Has thou no care of me? Shall I abide
> In this dull world, which in thy absence is
> No better than a sty?
>
> (IX.xv.59-63)

Only in death can they prove the value of their lives. Only in death can they triumph over Caesar.

Their own claims are, of course, suspect. In a real sense, their evaluation of their triumph is an "excellent falsehood" (I.i.40), as Cleopatra terms Antony's exuberant vision of love. The lovers are self-indulgent, self-dramatizing, and maybe self-deceived, unable to commit themselves to each other until everything has been lost; and Caesar does survive them both as "universal landlord" (III.iii.72). Yet Cleopatra is certain that "'tis paltry to be Caesar" (V.ii.2) if they can establish, even in death, the wholeness that tragedy would deny. In their deaths they define and commit themselves to values far removed from those of the Roman world. Power and possession give way to passion and possibility. The lovers define a union, however, denied by the play's action; if they take at last the vows of love, they do so only as they enter "the secret house of death" (IX.xv.83).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Antony and Cleopatra verbally escape tragic necessity, but only in the romances does Shakespeare redeem the tragic pattern. Here, the banished females of the tragedies survive, and faithless males are given second chances to recognize and reclaim what Lear calls "true need." Leontes reenacts Othello's lacerating jealousy, but in *The Winter's Tale*, neither he nor Hermione dies. Like Othello, Leontes agonizingly comes to know his error, but here, error leads to repentence and finally to the renewal of love. Unlike the tragedies, what is "dissevered" (V.iii.155) is reconnected; Hermione lives to embrace her erring husband.

Leontes' error does not, of course, go unpunished. Mamillius dies, and even the compensatory rhythms of romance cannot bring him back. The punishment for Leontes' faithlessness is the loss of the son, the loss of patrilineal hope; and the proof of Leontes' awakened faith, the result of his tearful "recreation," is that he will champion the love and desire of Florizel and Perdita even in the face of paternal opposition. "I am sorry, / Most sorry," he says, "you have broken from his liking / Where you were tied in duty" (V.i.210-12). Nonetheless, he recognizes that the rule of the father must bow to other necessities:

> I will to your father.
> Your honor not o'erthrown by your desires,
> I am friend to them and you. Upon which errand
> I now go toward him.
>
> (V.i.228-31)

Although he knows that the lovers have lied to him and defied Polixenes, he accepts the challenge to the patriarchal order that their flight implies. He is transformed from *alazon* to *eiron*, now blessing what previously he had banished.

The oracle had stated that "the king shall live without an heir if that which is lost be not found" (III.ii.133-34), and what was lost is now returned. Leontes recovers Perdita, the lost daughter, and her return reveals and makes possible the return of other losses—his lost faith and his "dead" wife. Continuity depends upon the rediscovery and integration of the female child, unlike the history plays, where succession depends upon male heirs. Falstaff scornfully dismisses those who "when they marry . . . get wenches" (*2 Henry IV*, IV.iii.90-91), but in the romances, those "wenches" redeem the past and insure the future.

Daughters are prominent in all the romances.[18] Every woman is, of course, a daughter, but the daughters of the romances are important *as* daughters in ways they are not in other plays. The will of the father determines much of the action in, for example, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* or *Romeo and Juliet*, as daughters are victimized by patriarchy: "As she is mine, I may dispose of her" (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, I.i.42). These plays, however, primarily concern the lovers' efforts to evade the rigidities of paternal will rather than focus upon the complex bonds that must exist between father and daughter. In *Othello*, Desdemona does admit her "divided duty" (I.iii.181), but though we hear of Brabantio's death—her "match was mortal to him" (V.ii.206)—it is as wife rather than as daughter that she lives and dies on stage. Before the romances, only *King Lear* makes the relationship of father and daughter primary. Lear has neither wife nor son, and much therefore—perhaps too much—depends upon Cordelia's love.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Like Desdemona, Cordelia recognizes a divided duty: "Sure I shall never marry like my sisters, / To love my father all" (I.i.103-4). Lear, however, wants what he must not have. Her dowry is made dependent upon a profession of love to him that would negate the dowry's role as part of her commitment to a husband. Paradoxically, in banishing her, he seeks to keep her: with only truth for Cordelia's dowry, Lear's expectation is that no one will have her for a wife. In rejecting his proper paternal role for an improper possessive one, Lear blights the familial promise (inherent in romantic comedy). Cordelia does at last return to Lear, but the reunion of father and daughter is celebrated in defeat rather than victory, guaranteed in death rather than in life.

If the love of Lear and Cordelia contains obscure hints of incestuous desire—not least in his fantasy that they "two alone will sing like birds i' th' cage" (V.ii.9)—the romances purify the relationship of father and daughter. In *Pericles*, the forbidden is actualized, as Antiochus and his daughter, "buxom, blithe, and full of face" (I.Cho.23), are in fact guilty of incest. "Bad child; worse father" (I.Cho.27), says Gower, who relates also that many come to seek the hand of the beautiful daughter,

> Which to prevent [Antiochus] made a law—
> To keep her still, and men in awe—
> That who asked her for his wife,
> His riddle told not, lost his life.
>
> (I.Cho.35-38)

What for Lear is only latent and symbolic, for Antiochus is manifest. Antiochus designs a ceremony, like the one Lear stages, whose actual function is the opposite of what it putatively intends. Each father apparently seeks to give away his marriageable daughter, but each in fact wishes "to keep her still."

Pericles understands the terrible secret of the riddle and must flee to save his life. His suffering is thus somehow related to his recognition of Antiochus's "loathed" sin,[19] and his release from that suffering is significantly triggered by the sight of his daughter. Marina stands before him, and Pericles awakens to the world. However, rather than arousing lust in Pericles, the attractive young woman, who has been living in a brothel in Mytilene, recalls and rekindles legitimate relationships:

> My dearest wife was like this maid, and such a one
> My daughter might have been.
>
> (V.i.108-9)

In a vision, Pericles sees Diana, the chaste goddess, who instructs him to go to Ephesus. There he finds Thaisa, his wife, "supposed dead / And drowned" (V.iii.35-36), and there he grants Lysimachus's suit to marry Marina, redeeming Antiochus's (and Lear's) possessiveness. The fire that consumes Antiochus and his daughter purges the romance world of forbidden love, and the reunion of Pericles and his daughter releases the lawful love that is at once its subject and agent.

If the return of the female child is the trigger for regeneration, it is as evidence of the repudiation of the destructive emotional logic of patriarchy. "Younger sons, and particularly daughters, were often unwanted," writes Lawrence Stone about sixteenth and seventeenth century England, "and might

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

be regarded as no more than a tiresome drain on the economic resources of the family."[20] Daughters in the romances, however, must be acknowledged, but the psychological threat of their acknowledgment has to be defused, as in *Pericles*. In *The Winter's Tale*, Leontes must recover Perdita to fulfill the prophecy, but the dramatic emphasis of the final act is only incidentally upon the reunion of father and daughter (which is narrated, not shown). The final scene, with its extraordinary *coup de théâtre*, centers on the reunion of father and mother. The old family is reestablished as a new one is begun. In *Cymbeline*, the potential disruption caused by the recovery of the daughter is similarly handled, though here, by focusing on the reunion of the youthful lovers. Imogen is at last discovered, but she turns immediately to embrace Posthumus, her husband, leaving her father reduced virtually to impatient throat-clearing:

> How now, my flesh, my child?
> What, mak'st thou me a dullard in this act?
> Wilt thou now speak to me?
>
> (V.v.264-66)

The husband takes priority, and Cymbeline, appropriately displaced, must wait his turn.

The unaccustomed, secondary role is not one easily accepted, especially when the dispossessed father lacks a wife. Leontes and Hermione, Pericles and Thaisa are "precious winners" (*The Winter's Tale*, V.iii.131) having *recovered* the mutuality that Florizel and Perdita, Lysimachus and Marina first discover. Cymbeline, however, has no wife, and neither does Prospero. In *Cymbeline*, the dead queen is quickly dismissed: "O, she was naught," says Cymbeline (V.v.271), meaning that she was both morally evil and emotionally inconsequential. The loss of the queen and Cloten are more than amply repaid by the recovery of Imogen and the princes, and Cymbeline's joy finds significant expression:

> O, what am I?
> A mother to the birth of three?
>
> (V.v.368-69)

But if "ne'er mother / Rejoiced deliverance more," Cymbeline is yet but a father, and even the wonderful harmonies of the ending leave him incomplete.

Like Cymbeline, Prospero would be—or rather, must be—both mother and father. "Had I not / Four or five women once that tended me?" asks Miranda (*The Tempest*, I.ii.46-47), but set adrift with Prospero, then landed on the island, she has been raised solely by her father for twelve years. "Thy mother was a piece of virtue" (I.ii.56), Prospero says, but that is the only mention she receives.

Prospero has preserved and nourished Miranda, yet she has done the same for him. "What trouble / Was I then to you," says Miranda (I.ii.151-52), as she hears the tale of their experience on the ocean, but Prospero denies her concern:

> O, a cherubin
> Thou wast that did preserve me! Thou didst smile,
> Infused with a fortitude from heaven,
> When I have decked the sea with drops full salt,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Under my burden groaned: which raised in me
> An undergoing stomach, to bear up
> Against what should ensue.
>
> (I.ii.152-58)

He has lived through her and for her, and if the hour of his project is at hand, the time has been set by his recognition of her need now for another man to live for her and for whom she might live.

In his twelve years on the island, Prospero has enjoyed Lear's fantasy, but he knows that Miranda must leave him. He has protected and educated her, but fulfillment of his paternal role demands that he release her from dependence upon him. Still his pleasure that his project "works" (I.ii.494) is not unequivocal. He may well claim that his rough treatment of Ferdinand is justified, "lest too light winning / Make the prize light" (I.ii.452-53), but the abuse reveals that he cannot give up his daughter as easily as he intends. His stern trials proclaim his superiority, and his unnecesssarily strident and unmotivated warnings about sexual behavior reveal more about his erotic imagination than Ferdinand's:

> If thou dost break her virgin-knot before
> All sanctimonious ceremonies may
> With full and holy rite be minist'red,
> No sweet aspersion shall the heavens let fall
> To make this contract grow; but barren hate,
> Sour-eyed disdain, and discord shall bestrew
> The union of your bed with weeds so loathly
> That you shall hate it both.
>
> (IV.i.15-22)

When he, seeing their pledges of love, grants that "so glad of this as they I cannot be" (III.i.92), perhaps he admits more than he wants to.

Gonzalo recognizes *The Tempest*'s powerful impulse toward renewal and recovery:

> in one voyage
> Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis,
> And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
> Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
> In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
> When no man was his own.
>
> (V.i.208-13)

Yet, if much has been found, something has been lost. "I / Have lost my daughter," announces Prospero (V.i.147-48), and if he avoids the shock and bitterness of a Shylock or a Brabantio, the loss is no less real or rending for being recognized as inevitable and appropriate. Unlike the fathers in the other romances, Prospero does not recover a missing daughter; rather he gives one up that he has always had and cherished. But only that loss, even if reluctantly sought and accepted, permits loss to be transformed into gain, permits romance, as it considers "the way of womenkind" (*Pericles*, IV.vi.141), to redeem tragedy. Prospero releases Ferdinand and Miranda to each other, to the intimacy and mutuality he will be denied.[21]

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

REFERENCES

[1]*Certain Sermons or Homilies Appointed to be Read in Churches* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1908), p. 537.

[2]*The First and Second Prayer Books of King Edward VI* (1920; reprinted, London: Dent, 1964), p. 252.

[3]*Four Lectures on Shakespeare*, edited by Christopher St. John (London: Martin Hopkinson Ltd., 1932), pp. 79-122.

[4]*Table Talk*, edited by William Hazlett, no. 725; quoted in *The Family, Sex, and Marriage in England, 1500-1800*, by Lawrence Stone (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), pp. 203-04.

[5]*The Drama of Power* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1973).

[6]See David M. Bevington, "The Domineering Female in *1 Henry VI*," *Shakespeare Studies* 2 (1966): 51-58; and Leslie A. Fiedler, *The Stranger in Shakespeare* (New York: Stein and Day, 1972), pp. 43-51.

[7]*The First Blast of the Trumpet Against the Monstrous Regiment of Women* ([Geneva], 1558).

[8]See Madonne M. Miner, "Neither mother, wife, nor England's queen: The Roles of Women in *Richard III*," in *The Woman's Part*, edited by Carolyn Ruth Swift Lenz, Gayle Greene, and Carol Thomas Neely (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 35-55.

[9]For another account of this parallel, see Robert J. Lordi, "Brutus and Hotspur," *Shakespeare Quarterly* 27 (1976): 177-85.

[10]See E. A. J. Honigmann, *Shakespeare: Seven Tragedies* (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), pp. 30-53; and Moody E. Prior, "The Search for a Hero in *Julius Caesar*," *Renaissance Drama* N.S. 2 (1969): esp. 94-99.

[11]Marilyn French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, (New York: Summit Books, 1981), pp. 155-57; see also Madelon Gohlke, " 'I wooed thee with my sword': Shakespeare's Tragic Paradigms," in *The Woman's Part*, esp. pp. 153-56.

[12]See David Leverenz, "The Woman in Hamlet: An Interpersonal View," *Signs 4* (1978): 291-308.

[13]S. N. Garner, "Shakespeare's Desdemona," *Shakespeare Studies* 9 (1976): 233-52.

[14]See Richard Wheeler, *Shakespeare's Development and the Problem Comedies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), esp. pp. 201-02.

[15]*Four Lectures on Shakespeare*, p. 161.

[16]Coppélia Kahn, *Man's Estate: Masculine Identity in Shakespeare* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 180-82. See also Robert B. Heilman, "Manliness in the Tragedies: Dramatic Variations," *Shakespeare 1564-1964: A Collection of Modern Essays*, edited by Edward Bloom (Providence: Brown University Press, 1964), pp. 19-37; and Jarold Ramsey, "The Perversion of Manliness in *Macbeth*," *SEL (Studies in English Literature)* 13 (1973): 285-300.

[17]French, *Shakespeare's Division of Experience*, p. 251.

[18]Charles Frey, " 'O sacred, shadowy, cold, and constant queen': Shakespeare's Imperiled and Chastening Daughters of Romance." *South Atlantic Bulletin* 43 (1978): 125-40. Reprinted in *The Woman's Part*, pp. 295-313; and Cyrus Hoy, "Fathers and Daughters in Shakespeare's Romances," in *Shakespeare's Romances Reconsidered*, edited by Carold McGinnis Kay and Henry E. Jacobs (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1978), pp. 77-90.

[19]See Kahn, *Man's Estate*, pp. 211-14.

[20]Stone, *The Family, Sex, and Marriage*, p. 112.

[21]A version of this paper was read at Yale on March 13, 1982, at a conference entitled "Renaissance Woman/Renaissance Men."

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN HOLLANDER

The West Wind and the Mingled Measure

A bench was his catalepsy, Theatre
Of Trope. He sat in the park. The water of
The lake was full of artificial things,

Like a page of music, like an upper air,
Like a momentary color, in which swans
Were seraphs, were saints, were changing essences.

The west wind was the music, the motion, the force
To which the swans curveted, a will to change,
A will to make iris frettings on the bank.

WALLACE STEVENS'S POET, at the end of Part II of *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*, sits watching the water, which is full of the notations of the music of change. He might have written, "The west wind was somehow *still* the music," for Stevens is invoking the sound of the Shelleyan west wind remembered. And yet the music of change, the will to change (and we are reminded that Schopenhauer ascribed music's authenticity to its being a copy of the will itself), must play, like the wind in Shelley's *Ode*, preserver and destroyer both—bringing about new meanings from old figurations. The west wind here is the music of changing scenes in this theatre of trope; the music had been Shelley's, but now became Stevens's own. The section of the *Notes* entitled "It Must Change" is an impassioned plea for the revisionary capacities of the metaphor of trope; and the incidental music of the west wind both announces and exemplifies here the kind of poetry being invoked, echoing Shelley, but somehow making us hear the reverse, Shelley echoing Stevens.

Stevens's version of Shelley's wind is a force, but not itself an instrument. Let us listen to some of the lines in which Shelley calls up the presence of the wind:

Make me thy lyre, even as the forest is:
What if my leaves are falling like its own!
The tumult of thy mighty harmonies

Will take from both a deep, autumnal tone,
Sweet though in sadness.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Harold Bloom once referred to the presence of the Aeolian Harp in these lines as a "failed metaphor." I should rather call it a successful transumption[1] of an eighteenth century image. Shelley's poet is an internalized wind harp, the forest, an externalized one, incorporating an older figure of the wind in the trees as playing a more authentic music than the twanging of a domestic harp; and finally, we are given the poet as forest as harp, which is indeed somewhat farther fetched than synchronic metaphor.

At another level, the failure or success of Shelley's figure may depend upon more literally choreographic matter. Certainly, there is something to be said for a closer examination of the precise orientation of wind direction and what we might call the vector of utterance. By the end of the poem, the speaker has had to turn away from speaking at right angles into the wind, which has been blowing through his hair and across his face, as the wind blows transversely through branches and across the strings of the Aeolian Harp. It is now blowing through him, but from behind; his shout is not lost across or against it, but shapes, modulates, and labializes into eloquence the prophetic force, which, blowing across the poet's figurative strings, rather than his mouthpiece, produces what Geoffrey Hartman might refer to as the lyricism of trans-verse. As for the Aeolian Harp itself, which was first described in detail by Athanasius Kircher in 1650 (in *Musurgia Universalis*), it consisted of a rectangular flat box with a sound hole and strings stretched across it; the strings, of varying diameter, were all tuned to a unison, and depending upon the velocity of the wind, produced combinations of the natural overtone series. Usually placed in a wind, the instrument generated a music, always imperfectly described in literature, rising from a single fundamental note to a fully developed chord, with added seventh and ninth.

Historians of romantic ideas, like M. H. Abrams, have helped us observe the way in which the Aeolian Harp, mythologically introduced into literature, could change from its first occurrence in English poetry, as an emblem of indolence, to its most common later forms.[2] In "The Eolian Harp," Coleridge brooded on a wind harp nearby, and wondered if all of nature could be considered as one organic harp "diversely fram'd." With Shelley, as we have seen, the wind harp becomes not only an emblem of nature played upon by something beyond it, but of imaginative humanity itself. "Man is an instrument," he says, in "A Defence of Poetry," "over which a series of external and internal impressions are driven, like the alternations of an ever-changing wind over an Aeolian lyre, which move it by their motion to ever-changing melody." But further than this, Shelley continues, there is "some principle within the human being"—Wordsworth called it a "correspondent breeze"—that by continually adapting the strings, retuning them, harmonizes the music played on the harp of consciousness by the ethereal fingers of the world. "It is as if the lyre would accommodate its chords [strings] to the motions of that which strikes them, in a determined proportion of sound; even as the musician can accommodate his voice to the sound of the lyre." The pure musical tone produced by the wind on the strings of the metaphoric instrument cannot, as a trope of poetry, remain unmixed for Shelley, even as consciousness cannot, for any romantic poet, remain inert or even passive. A further mixture of these two

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

sorts of wind-harp trope is apparent in the equally complex image of the German poet Novalis: "Nature is an Aeolian Harp—a musical instrument—whose notes themselves are the keys to higher strings in us."

Novalis, like many other German romantic writers, thought of music—of actual instrumental performance—as having, with mathematics, an ultimate spiritual significance; E. T. A. Hoffmann, writing of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony, could insist that "music is the most Romantic of all the arts . . . , for its sole subject is the Infinite." But while German, English, Italian, and French poets of the nineteenth century all share in the figurative consequences of the Aeolian Harp, the poets writing in English by no means accord the same transcendent powers to actual sonatas, quartets, symphonies, or even operatic arias. When Ralph Waldo Emerson can condemn bad poetry as being the "tinkle of piano strings"—and how could a Beethoven or Schubert sonata be thought to tinkle?—and say of poetry's harp that "its chords should ring as is the wind / Free, peremptory, clear," he is on the brink of invoking the wind-harp image itself. Anglo-American musical culture, particularly as it affected poets, was very sparse. Not only for Shelley, but for Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, not to speak of dozens of echoing voices, the west wind—not the instruments playing magnificently wrought structures of tone—was the music.

In his "Lines Composed in a Concert-Room," Coleridge calls out:

> Nor cold, nor stern my soul! yet I detest
> These scented Rooms, where, to a gaudy throng,
> Heaves the proud Harlot her distended breast,
> In intricacies of laborious song.

"These feel not Music's genuine power," he adds, slamming the door on the singer, and wandering out into Nature's unbounded concert hall, where memories of childhood minstrelsy ("Scottish tunes and warlike marches") and a weeping boy fluting in a remembered boat make genuine sounds of passion; and where

> birds or trees,
> Or moan of ocean-gale in weedy caves,
> Or where the stiff grass mid the heath-plant waves,
> Murmur and music thin of sudden breeze.

His notebooks are full of musical material: the phenomenology of hearing, comments on particular operatic performances, the almost seventeenth-century-sounding emblematic use of conceits drawn from musical instruments and effects, and even the quite German-sounding generalities such as, "The generic how superior to the particular illustrated in Music, how infinitely more perfect in passion and its transitions than even Poetry." And yet, the active musicians of his imagination, such as the wind as mad string-player in "Dejection" and the Abyssinian maid in "Kubla Khan," are as far removed from concert room, stage, or salon as myth can take them. We seldom find in England the actual musician mythologized, as by Hoffmann or Grillparzer later, into an ultimate demonic or creative presence. Leigh Hunt alone among English writers could attempt to bring the solitary wandering consciousness indoors to a private

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

concert, or adapt the modes of poetic celebration of birds or moving air to a piece on Paganini playing.

In "Kubla Khan," the sound of the sacred river bursting forth creatively, flowing in eloquence, is mingled with its echoes and responses. Shortly after, Coleridge recalls a "damsel with a dulcimer" seen in a vision, the juxtaposition of the supernatural "natural" sound underscoring the eroticized scene of imaginative fulfillment with that of a visionary singer, or with poetic song itself. The mingled string and wind music of the Aeolian Harp was in itself a powerful preromantic contemplation of what had been thought of in antiquity and afterward as the two modalities of harp, or lyre, and flute: reason and energy, Apollonian man and Panic. The specific phrase Coleridge uses in "Kubla Khan" comes from William Collins's ode for music, "The Passions." In it, states of feeling are substituted for particular musical instruments, in the varied sections of a form of secular cantata in praise of music that was, from the time of John Dryden, sung at annual celebrations. Collins's poem (which is partially an allegory of poetry taking over the realm of music) devotes its figurative arias and choruses to Fear, Anger, Hope, Revenge, Pity, and many more, each of which, in the ode's narrative, has, charmed by music, "Stretch'd her Instruments of Sound" in order to express themselves. In the case of Melancholy—the eighteenth century kind—she and her music are heard over distant water:

> And from her wild sequester'd seat
> In Notes by Distance made more sweet
> Pour'd through the mellow horn her pensive Soul
> And dashing soft from rocks around,
> Bubbling runnels join'd the Sound;
> Through Glades and Glooms the mingled Measure stole

The horn-music, filtered appropriately by distance—which romanticizes and tunes it—is then mingled with the eloquence of brooks or runnels. Babbling, in poetic language, mingles with the pure music of feeling here; but the image also harmonizes natural sound with instrumental music, as if thereby to redeem that cultured, institutional music from insignificance or triviality. Had Coleridge, years later, been able to hear the wind in the concert hall, he might have been able to bear the singing, for the mingled pleasure of diva and wind would have made a true music of "genuine power."

The strange privilege given to what is, acoustically speaking, noise (white noise) raises many interesting questions. A historian of consciousness such as Michel Foucault might want to observe that acoustics itself is a problematic science; that although radical revisions were made in other scientific fields, such as optics (revisions that lay close to the heart of physical science itself), our account of what happens, neurologically speaking, when we "hear" hasn't much changed since the pre-Socratics (except for the refinements of Fourier analysis, for example, which analyzed auditory confusion as a crowd of competing simplicities); that although acoustics has remained simple, and its waves of human scale, there was no acoustic reproduction or mimesis, save for echoes or parrots, until Edison. The historian might also observe that the first essay on *noise* that we have is Schopenhauer's, wherein, writing in a noisy city, he propounds for the first time the notion that sensitivity to volume increases with one's level of intelligence, and observes that his only precursors are Lichten-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

berg, Goethe, Jean Paul, late eighteenth century urban consciousnesses, attentive, like himself, to new kinds of noise in the world. More of that shortly.

I might also suggest that behind most of my own observations lies the fact that, although we have in English the pair of words visual and visionary—the first epistemological, the second figurative, in scope—we have no such parallel set for hearing, such as auditory and, say, "auditionary." We cannot talk of hearing an "audition" as we do of seeing a vision; we have to speak of a sort of visionary sound, as it were. The perfectly good Latin *imago vocis* means only "echo." Such visionary sound is described in Theocritus's and Virgil's pastorals, describing, in the first instance, the natural noises of wind, water, birds, and the voices of herds and flocks. Virgil, more concerned for the derivative and allusive, starts out his first eclogue by having his poet-shepherd Tityrus at ease in the shade to *teach the woods* to echo the name of fair Amaryllis *[lentus in umbra / formosam resonare doces Amaryllida silvas]*. While the theory of echo and its figure of intertextuality—of poems echoing other poems—would claim this as an important fable for its concerns, we might observe that it is etiological in another way: poetry, figurative language, *teaches* natural noise—meaningless, unmusical even—*to speak*, to represent signification, if not simply to yield it. A more recent etiological fable of this kind is Robert Frost's sonnet about Eve's most eloquent voice, which, "when song or laughter carried it aloft," imprinted "an undersong, her tone of meaning but without the words," on the unsonglike bird noises—thus instituting the appropriate use of "sing" for what birds do: "and to do that to birds was why she came."[3]

But our fables of origins are all, in the literal sense of the word, *preposterous*—before-afterly—and our visionary natural sounds, in our unfallen state before there were death, skills, culture, and specifically, music (for Milton, other than the songs of praise and Edenic love), are all informed by our sense of our complex culture making sense out of itself by "doing that to birds." I want to turn now to a complex example from English Renaissance poetry, not of what the music of paradise was like, but rather how that of a false paradise sounded.

In Book II of Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, Sir Guyon comes upon the end of his quest, The Bower of Bliss, which he is to destroy. It is a garden not so much of earthly delights, but, we might say, of what D. H. Lawrence called "Sex-in-the-head" (we might add "male-style," the female place of ideological sexual fantasy being the House of Busyrane in Book III). The structure of the Bower is such that, even as we and Sir Guyon are aware of its inauthentic nature, its seductions are apparent, and its traps for the eye attractive. But let us attend only to its auditory lines. As Guyon and his attendant approach,

> Eftsoones they heard a most melodious sound,
> Of all that mote delight a daintie eare,
> Such as attonce might not on liuing ground,
> Saue in this Paradise, be heard elswhere:
> Right hard it was for wight, which did it heare,
> To read, what manner musicke that mote bee:
> For all that pleasing is to liuing eare,
> Was there consorted in one harmonee,
> Birdes, voyces, instruments, windes, waters, all agree.
>
> (II.Xii.70)

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The next stanza is one of the most celebrated in Spenser. Although derived from Tasso's *Gerusalemme Liberata*, it describes the concert in the bower, line by interlocking line, corresponding to layered parts in a musical score, the higher voices joined to the lower ones through the elegant punning repetition of the word "meet" (in the sense of "appropriate" and as the common verb) where the two halves of the stanza meet.

> The ioyous birdes shrouded in chearefull shade,
> Their notes vnto the voyce attempred sweet;
> Th'Angelicall soft trembling voyces made
> To th'instruments diuine respondence meet:
> The siluer sounding instruments did meet
> With the base murmure of the waters fall:
> The waters fall with difference discreet,
> Now soft, now load, vnto the wind did call:
> The gentle warbling wind low answered to all.
>
> (II.Xii.71)

A sixteenth/seventeenth century reader would imagine a broken consort, as it was called, of winds, strings, and perhaps keyboard. We might also notice, however, corresponding to the mixture of voices and instruments, the mingling here of various categories of sound, the harmonization of natural music with the artificial musical sounds of human voices and instruments. Each of the elements bears a part in a six-voice contrapuntal fantasy, the parts layered with respect to their range of pitch. The vertical chordal harmonies are represented in the passage by the interlocking repetitions, puns, and assonances of the text. The bass of the water has one part below it, for the wind, low-answering to all, is transposed from its place in the catalog line so as to conclude the actual description, responding to the sound, wafting it on its way, and presumably amplifying it.

Spenser's mingling of natural noise and human music hardly works here as its origins in classical and Renaissance pastorals would suggest; it is no trope of nature joining language in a dance of referential agreement. Nor is it here what it will become in the following centuries, a way of redeeming for poetic use a worn-out collection of figurations of music for truthful eloquence. (In the culture of Pandemonium, in the hell of *Paradise Lost*, Book II, where the fallen angels present a model of a sort of neoclassical culture, we observe philosophy being platonically valorized over poetry, "For eloquence the soul, song charms the sense.") In the Bower of Bliss, the mingling of the natural voices and the musical tones is part of the magic of Acrasia—the witch whose name, suggesting intemperance, can be literalized in the Greek as meaning "unmixed," "unmingled," in the sense of "untempered"—and is, morally and psychologically, bad news. Milton, mindful of Spenser's Bower of Bliss, even as he inverts its name's word-order to designate Adam and Eve's "blissful bower," gives us an account of the, naturally, unmingled concert in Eden:

> . . . meanwhile murmuring waters fall
> Down the slope hills, dispersed, or in a lake
> That to the fringed bank with myrtle crowned
> Her crystal mirror holds, unite their streams.
> The birds their quire apply; airs, vernal airs,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Breathing the smell of field and grove, attune
The trembling leaves, while universal Pan,
Knit with the Graces and the Hours in dance
Led on the eternal spring.

To trace the descent of Spenser's consort historically—which entails its ascent, or sublimation, morally—in romanticism, we might profitably begin with a directly satiric inversion of the mingled measure stanza. The young Alexander Pope, in a deliberate comic exercise, an "Imitation of Spenser" entitled "The Alley,"[4] parodies the structure of the famous stanza in a musical introduction to what we might call the Bower of Noise, or London:

. . . Now singing shrill, and scolding eft between,
Scolds answer foul-mouth'd Scolds; bad Neighbourhood I ween.

The snappish cur, (the Passengers annoy)
Close at my heel with yelping treble flies;
The whimp'ring Girl, the coarser-screaming Boy,
Join to the yelping treble shriller cries;
The scolding Quean to louder notes doth rise,
And her full pipes these shrilling Cries confound:
To her full Pipes the grunting Hog replies;
The grunting Hogs alarm the Neighbours round,
And curs, Girls, Boys, and Scolds, in the deep Base are drown'd.

The same impulse to satirize pastoral forms by presenting the actuality of the city turns on a different axis in Jonathan Swift's *A Description of the Morning*. Here, the purely pastoral consort in, say, Spenser's *The Teares of the Muses*, with its echoes of Virgil—

The trembling streams which wont in chanels cleare
To romble gently downe with murmur soft,
And were by them right tuneful taught to beare
A Bases part amongst their consorts oft—

is rudely travestied in the noises of energy, enterprise, and noncommunal activity in the sounds of London:

The Small-Coal Man was heard with Cadence deep,
Till drown'd in shriller notes of Chimney-sweep.
Duns at his Lordship's Gate began to meet,
And Brick-dust Moll had scream'd thro' half a street.

We can trace, in the eighteenth century, several lines of gradual revision of the figure of noises in chorus. The purely pastoral layering of natural sound in the green cabinet of the *locus amoenus*, or lovely spot, can, framed by the appropriate sceneric devices, testify to the presence, not of the secluded, but of the Sublime. Thus, in a formerly Spenserian stanza—but not structurally so, in the least—from James Beattie's *The Minstrel*, the young bard is seen

Lo! where the stripling, wrapt in wonder roves
Beneath the precipice o'erhung with pine;
And sees, on high, amidst th' encircling groves,
From cliff to cliff the foaming torrents shine:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

While waters, woods, and winds, in concert join,
And Echo swells the chorus to the skies.
Would Edwin this majestic scene resign
For aught the huntsman's puny craft supplies?
Ah! no: he better knows great Nature's charms to prize.

Here, the chorus of nature, and the approving and authenticating amplifications of Echo, testify to the majesty of the scene, and to the mingling of pictorial agitation and near terror—"the foaming torrents shine," but do not, as in the usual cliché, "roar"with aural harmony. On the other hand, the pastoral music of eclogue can sing the song of another sort of nature (the actual agrarian world classical tradition associated with Virgil's Georgics, rather than mythologized pastoral) in John Dyer's poem of sheepshearing, *Grongar Hill:*

While the wanton Zephyr sings,
And in the vale perfumes his wings;
While the waters murmur deep;
While the shepherd charms his sheep;
While the birds unbounded fly,
And with musick fill the sky,
Now, ev'n now, my joys run high.

William Cowper in *The Task*, however, makes of the natural noises—again, unblended with human noise—something other than a naively adapted trope of layered, polyphonic parts in an open choir. In the following passage, he is very conscious of listening as an epistemological event: he is concerned for the relation of ear and eye, and how visual images can serve as figurations of aural ones, and particularly of silence. The listening consciousness, in these lines, is on the brink of becoming an active one, and the implications of free polyphony frozen in the old Spenserian trope are loosened into what anticipates the later symphonic:

Nor rural sights alone, but rural sounds,
Exhilarate the spirit, and restore
The tone of languid Nature. Mighty winds,
That sweep the skirt of some far-spreading wood
Of ancient growth, make music not unlike
The dash of ocean on his winding shore,
And lull the spirit while they fill the mind:
Unnumber'd branches waving in the blast,
And all their leaves fast flutt'ring, all at once.
Nor less composure waits upon the roar
Of distant floods, or on the softer voice
Of neighb'ring fountain, or of rills that slip
Through the cleft rock, and, chiming as they fall
Upon loose pebbles, lose themselves at length
In matted grass, that with a livelier green
Betrays the secret of their silent course.
Nature inanimate employs sweet sounds,
But animated Nature sweeter still,
To sooth and satisfy the human ear.
Ten thousand warblers cheer the day, and one
The live-long night: nor these alone, whose notes
Nice finger'd art must emulate in vain,

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

But cawing rooks, and kites that swim sublime
In still repeated circles, screaming loud,
The jay, the pie, and ev'n the boding owl
That hails the rising moon, have charms for me.
Sounds inharmonious in themselves and harsh,
Yet heard in scenes where peace for ever reigns,
And only there, please highly for their sake.

The restless spirit, lulled here, provides access to the mind to the significance of the sounds "inharmonious in themselves, and harsh"; in any case, we are on our way in these lines to Wordsworth. It is instructive to compare the passage from Cowper with the following lines from Wordsworth's early (1793) *Descriptive Sketches:*

An idle voice the sabbath region fills
Of Deep that calls to Deep across the hills,
Broke only by the melancholy sound
Of drowsy bells for ever tinkling round;
Faint wail of eagle melting into blue
Beneath the cliffs, and pine-woods steady sugh;

The solitary heifer's deepen'd low;
Or rumbling heard remote of falling snow.

Most un-Wordsworthian is that other developing convention in the eighteenth century, the noisy urban symphony. In these lines from Joseph Warton's *The Enthusiast*, the urban noises partake of the Sublime, full of unpurged images of Pity and Terror; their symphony is connected by one of those complex Miltonic conjunctions—"or"—with auditions of the natural sublime, almost as if to interpret the sounds of the city:

Oft near some crowded City would I walk,
Listening the far-off Noises, rattling Carrs,
Loud Shouts of Joy, sad Shrieks of Sorrow, Knells
Full slowly tolling, Instruments of Trade,
Striking mine Ears with one deep-swelling Hum.
Or wandering near the Sea, attend the Sounds
Of hollow Winds, and ever-beating Waves.
Ev'n when wild Tempests swallow up the Plains,
And *Boreas*' Blasts, big Hail, and Rains combine
To shake the Groves and Mountains, would I sit,
Pensively musing on th' outragious Crimes
That wake Heav'n's Vengeance: at such solemn Hours,
Daemons and Goblins thro' the dark Air shriek,
While *Hecat* with her black-brow'd Sisters nine,
Rides o'er the Earth, and scatters Woes and Deaths.
Then too, they say, in drear *Aegyptian* Wilds
The Lion and the Tiger prowl for Prey
With Roarings loud! the list'ning Traveller
Starts Fear-struck, while the hollow-echoing Vaults
Of Pyramids encrease the deathful Sounds.

Oliver Goldsmith's representation of what Geoffrey Hartman long ago called the "soundscape" of his deserted village takes back from Swift's satiric couplets of scored city noise the possible trope of community, natural propri-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ety—the village partook both of the country and the well-ordered *polis*. These sounds, "inharmonious in themselves or harsh (or as we might add, intrusive or ludicrous), are in their context heard as being as natural as gathering swallows twittering on the eaves:

> Sweet was the sound when oft at evening's close,
> Up yonder hill the village murmur rose;
> There as I past with careless steps and slow,
> The mingling notes came softened from below;
> The swain responsive as the milk-maid sung,
> The sober herd that lowed to meet their young,
> The noisy geese that gabbled o'er the pool,
> The playful children just let loose from school,
> The watch-dog's voice that bayed the whispering wind,
> And the loud laugh that spoke the vacant mind,
> These all in sweet confusion sought the shade,
> And filled each pause the nightingale had made.
> But now the sounds of population fail,
> No chearful murmurs fluctuate in the gale,
> No busy steps the grass-grown foot-way tread,
> For all the bloomy flush of life is fled.

Even the laughter of the village idiot mingles with these human and animal voices in a "sweet confusion" or blending (sweet, meaning specifically well-tuned or harmonious, is used twice); and the whole symphony alternates with the natural and mythological music of the nightingale, not as a jarring intrusion, but as an appropriate intermezzo. In general, the gradual revision of Spenser's image throughout the eighteenth century has been marked by two features. First, the dangerous, deceptive quality of the music of the false paradise, of the bower of the Circe-like figure who changes love into death, has been utterly superseded by a realm of sensibility. (It is worth noting here that the first appearance of the figure of the Aeolian Harp in our poetic literature is in James Thomson's *The Castle of Indolence*, in just such a region of indolence, of pastoral *otuim* transformed into a later condition of awareness, a region as inimical to the pseudo-Spenserian knights of art and industry as Acrasia's Bower of Bliss was to the temperate Sir Guyon.)

Second, the mingling of various categories of musical sound, speech sound, and urban and rural noise becomes not an instance of the insidious powers of art to feign nature (and this is always the other side of the coin, in Spenser, for art genuinely to reform it), but of the availability of contemporary experience to poetic attention, of the persistence, if imaginatively revised, of older tropes, and of the evolution of rural nature, even in its settled and cultivated forms, as the only true synecdoche of what had been—for Spenser, Bacon, and Milton—Creation.

After Wordsworth and Coleridge, English romantic poets continued to revise and expand upon this tradition of authenticating music by mixing it with noise. Further minglings of sound and smell derived from Renaissance commonplaces involving "airs," meaning both melodies and breezes; in Keats and Shelley, frequent further mixings of light and sound, and the dramaturgy of the eye yielding up the world to the ear; the mixtures of metaphor called

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

synaesthesias; the careful doublings of audition and vision in Tennyson, who, we might say, follows not only Keats, but also Coleridge, in the mingling of the shadow of the dome of pleasure on the waves of Alph, the sacred river, in "Kubla Khan," with the acoustically mingled measure of the sounds. The direct treatment of actual music in Leigh Hunt is followed, more profoundly, in Robert Browning and Gerard Manly Hopkins, for whom instrumental music needs no redemptive power of noise to qualify it as a metaphor for poetry itself.[5]

In later romantic tradition, then, we can hear the music of noise echoing these various modes. There are many appearances of the natural concert, some of them attentive to their own poetic tradition in their use of the word "mingling"—rather than "blending," "mixing," "according," "harmonizing"—but gently modulating the earlier strain. In a fine early poem of William Cullen Bryant, "Summer Wind," the poet hails the embrace of the virgin landscape, moved by "scorching heat and dazzling light," by the arriving bridegroom of the breeze:

> He comes;
> Lo, where the grassy meadow runs in waves!
> The deep distressful silence of the scene
> Breaks up with minglings of unnumbered sounds
> And universal motion. He is come,
> Shaking a shower of blossoms from the shrubs,
> And bearing on their fragrance; and he brings
> Music of birds, and rustling of young boughs,
> And sound of swaying branches, and the voice
> Of distant waterfalls . . .

In the poem quoted earlier by Ralph Waldo Emerson, wherein the bard Merlin scorns "the tinkle of piano strings" or the jingle of the bad poets' "trivial harp" (what poets have always called mere rhymers—Chaucer's "drasty rhymers," Spenser's "Tom Piper," and so on—but which today we should have to call "jagged-right-hand edgers," an unattuned free verse having replaced empty jingle as the mode in which nonpoets write), Merlin, or the true poets, must mingle the powerful surges of his voice with more than the natural noises, rural or urban, domesticated by two centuries of earlier poetry. Merlin's songs must chime

> with the forest tone
> When boughs buffet boughs in the wood;
> Chiming with the gasp and moan
> Of the ice-imprisoned flood;
> With the pulse of many hearts;
> With the voice of orators;
> With the din of city arts;
> With the cannonade of wars;
> With the marches of the brave;
> And prayers of might from martyrs' cave.

This chorus mingles the sounds of life, of nature, and of culture, representing them with the batterings of anaphora (With the pulse, With the voice, With the din). Readers familiar with the history of the American imagination will recall how this heralds the coming of Whitman, by example as well as by

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

precept. For Emerson, the old tropes of natural harmony must be revised to remain authentic, but he still inclines toward the Wordsworthian-Coleridgean distrust even of "pure music"—in "the din of city arts" we are to hear crashes, bangs, rattles, curses, directed at dawdling laborers, but not the music of choir, organ, aria, or string quartet. The so-called singing of true poets must proceed from the romantic sublime ("the gasp and the moan / of the ice imprisoned flood"), away from the condition of solitary wonder into the din of civilization and back into the cave of martyred selfdom.

Walt Whitman himself, on the other hand, represents a fascinating shift in the history of poetic revision of the mythology of tone, sound, and noise. Although Emerson, in the passage just quoted, could indeed depend upon the older format of the musical score, could treat the score of each kind of noise as an instrument more genuinely "musical" than string or wind, only the military band becomes the mere sounding board of the more abstract "marches of the brave." But Whitman was a music-lover in the extreme, and if not the well-trained, precisely observant, and analytic musical amateur that Browning was, he was certainly as devoted and ecstatic an opera-lover as Schopenhauer (who, in believing that music, far from supplying tropes of emotion to underscore dramatic scenes, gave significance and meaning to them, conceptually invented Wagner, as Nietzsche later understood). Whitman can revise and reinterpret the figuration of the natural symphony by reorchestrating its earlier forms—the winds and strings of mingled rural noise and human music, the further mingling of percussive urban din and rural sound, Emerson's music of life. A beautiful little poem of 1861 consists solely of a page of this orchestrated theme, or rather, of the first page, which indicates the instrumentation and other specifications:

> I heard you solemn-sweet pipes of the organ as last Sunday morning
> I pass'd the church,
> Winds of autumn, as I walk'd up the woods at dusk I heard your long-
> stretch'd sighs up above so mournful,
> I heard the perfect Italian tenor singing at the opera, I heard the
> soprano in the midst of the quartet singing;
> Heart of my love! you too I heard murmuring low through one of the
> wrists around my head,
> Heard the pulse of you when all was still ringing little bells last
> night under my ear.

In an earlier version, Whitman had included lines about "war-suggesting trumpets" and a lady playing "delicious music on the harp," but these were wisely cut from the later text, for they make the scoring top heavy with sociologically overdetermined or emblematic musical scenes, literalize too many of the polyphonic voices. As it is, the text moves down from high to low, from its treble part to its bottom line, with a valorization (or moralizing tincture) quite opposite to Spenser's original one, where, as we will remember, the moral value of baseness functions intricately in the misleading harmony. Here, the thorough bass line, the heart of the harmonious matter, not only takes up two lines of the text, but is itself a pure instance of poetic measured mingling—the pulse in the lover's wrist "ringing little bells." It is this humanized music that we come down to at bottom; the eros of attentive listening, the recognition of *that* sort of pulse within, and giving structural *raison d'être* to, all music. We read

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

down, in these lines, from church music to windsounds to opera, to the curfew that tolls us, music-drunken, into an internalized worship of, and in, body.

Whitman's elaborated soundscapes are famous and varied; we might dwell here over his oceanic whispers, his birdcalls, the hermit thrush of "When Lilacs Last in the Door Yard Bloom'd" (singing to him, never in life, but from the forests of John Burroughs's rich hearsay, and heard again, from Whitman's own green leaves, by the unacknowledging Eliot in *The Waste Land*). But the mingled measure itself breaks out most clearly in his songs of occupations. The 1860 poem "I Hear America Singing" mentions the metonymic chants of mechanics, carpenters, masons, and others. Here, though, the bass lines, the interpretive ground of all these, are embedded within the poem, not revealed at its close. Lines nine through eleven speak of

> Each singing what belongs to him or her and
> to none else,
> The day what belongs to the day—at night
> the party of young fellows, robust,
> friendly,
> Singing with open mouths their strong melodi-
> ous songs

—the exotic camaraderie providing the undersong here.

The great midcanto of *Song of Myself*, the twenty-sixth of its fifty-two sections, is a major poetic audition, and a remarkable revision of the older formal English ode for, and to, music. "I think I will do nothing for a long time but listen," it begins, resolving "to accrue what I hear into this song" ("myself," he had originally written), "to let sounds contribute toward it" (this had been "toward me" in 1855-60). In the middle of the song that is both "of" in the sense of "about," and "of" as composed of "self," itself being the music (and how the revisions noted just now embody that metaphor), Whitman proceeds from:

> I hear bravuras of birds, bustle of growing
> wheat, gossip of flames, clack of sticks cooking my meals,
> I hear the sound I love, the sound of the human
> voice
> I hear all sounds running together, combined,
> fused or following,
> Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city,
> sounds of the day and night . . . ,

to

> I hear the violoncello ('Tis a young man's
> heart's complaint) . . .
> I hear the key'd cornet . . . ,

and ends up with the transcendence and ravishment of

> I hear the train'd soprano (she convulses me
> like the climax of my love-grip)
> The orchestra whirls me wider than Uranus flies . . . ,

to the conclusion:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

I lose my breath
Steep'd amid honey's morphine my windpipe throttled
in fakes of death
At length let up again to the puzzle of puzzles,
And what we call Being.

In Walt Whitman's chant of self-origination (or should I say, of *self*-origination that not only reclaimed all sources from priority, but invented as well the idea of the kind of self that invents), the ultimate mingling of all measures, whether previously unmeasured or not, is needed to round out the truest harmony. There would seem to be nothing more to sing of what the world's true song is. In later poems like "Proud Music of the Storm," he modulates the musical ode to another key; and in a later poem, he hears a regimental band playing arrangements of arias from Bellini and Donizetti:

Through the soft evening air enwinding all
Rocks, wood, fort, cannon, pacing sentries,
endless wilds,
Electric, pensive, turbulent, artificial . . .

Here, Whitman scores the enwound, listening elements, rather than the instruments, for it is the elements of listening scenes that are mingled. The opera-lover can hear this paraphrase for winds of what was originally highly wrought—and even, after all, overwrought, for voices, strings, and more—as being artificial at several removes,

(Yet strangely fitting here, meanings unknown before,
Subtler than ever, more harmony, as if born here, related
here,
Not to the city's fresco'd rooms, not to the audience of the
opera house,
Sounds, echoes, wandering strains, as really here at home
Sonnambula's innocent love, tries with Norma's anguish,
And thy ecstatic chorus, *Poliuto;*)
Ray'd in the limpid yellow slanting sundown,
Music, Italian music in Dakota.

Wallace Stevens, ever attentive to the way in which the west wind had been the music, employs the trope of the natural choir in an early poem like "Sunday Morning," apparently without significant revision. The chant to the sun of the ring of men, "supple and turbulent on a summer morn," is not of a god, but as a god might be. And it is this poetic revision of religion, in this poem that might have been entitled, "Not Church-Going," that is echoed, reechoed, and thus reaffirmed by nature:

And in their change shall enter, voice by voice;
The windy lake wherein their lord delights
The trees, like Serafin, and echoing kills,
That choir among themselves long afterward—

But as Stevens comes more and more to struggle with the problem of poetic vision as originating in revision, his allusive alterations of tradition demand more than merely reechoing. I have already mentioned the figure of revised

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

figuration, the diachronic trope of transumption, as the classical rhetorician Quintillian called it; we can see it operating in the successive alterations of the kinds of category mingled in the concert of life that we have been overhearing.

Thus the mixture of natural and human sounds in Spenser—the natural chorus scored as if in musical orchestration in the eighteenth century, the city noises—is first adduced satirically against the clichés of pastoral poetry, then acquires a metaphorically musical character of its own. For Wordsworth, the "sad music of humanity" was "still" or silent; but for the American romantics who followed him, the human and natural choirs are sections of one orchestra.

In tracing these revisions of the trope of mingling, it is easy to fall into the stance of the historian of ideas, the thematic chronicler. But poetry's own history of itself is not thematic, and it is in the allusive history of figuration that poets write. The revision of prior metaphor, the quickening of old images that have frozen into statues or bric-a-brac, the rebuilding from echoing clay of new living figures, animated by the present breath of voice—this is the allusively originating role of transumption. The kind of figure that gets its strength from the way it both recalls and transcends a prior one is by no means the same as a mere modulation of a *topos* or commonplace. Thus, while the image of the Aeolian Harp is widespread in nineteenth century European poetry, it is at significant moments in the work of major poets that it is revised. Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind," as we saw, internalized the organic harp—as Coleridge had called it—of the natural world, as did his "Defence of Poetry," even more profoundly.

We might observe that the commonplace of the wind playing the strings of the harp gets expanded to include light, sunlight or moonlight as well as moving air, playing through or over the strings; a later romantic poet like George Meredith can invoke in "The Star Sirius" the life-giving beams that "Dark Earth since first she lost her Lord from sight / Has viewed and felt them sweep her like a lyre." So too the wonderful unsung American poet of the turn of the century, Trumbull Stickney, in "Sunium," his sonnet of the temple of Poseidon at Sunion:

> These are the strings of the Aegean lyre
> Across the sky and sea in glory hung:
> Columns of white thro' which the wind has flung
> The clouds and stars, and drawn the rain and fire.
> Their flutings now to fill the notes' desire
> Are strained and dubious, yet in music young
> They cast their full-blown answer far along
> To where in sea the island hills expire.
> How bravely from the quarry's earthen gloom
> In snow they rose amid the blue to stand
> Melodious and alone on Sunium!
> They shall not wither back into the land.
> The sun that harps them with his golden hand
> Doth slowly with his hand of gold consume.

Even more radical a transumption of the wind harp can be found in Hart Crane's *The Bridge*, where it is not merely the wind playing through the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge that makes transcendent music, but the figurative music of imagery itself:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

> Through the bound cable-strands, the arching path
> Upward, veering with light, the flight of strings,
> Taut miles of shuttling moonlight syncopate
> The whispered rush, telepathy of wires . . .
>
> As though a god were issue of the strings . . .

Here, the *topos* of light-as-wind is brought round, through the dense tropes of sound, voice, touch, electric transmission of voice, music, and emotion, to a higher mingled music again. The music of technological noise itself, to which Crane, as a kind of visionary American futurist, was so attentive, can in fact be found in an earlier transumption of the Aeolian Harp. Henry David Thoreau kept in his journals over many years an ongoing prose-poem about what he called his telegraph-harp—the Aeolian acoustical effect generated by telegraph wires in the wind, made audible by the sound-post of the pole when the ear is applied to it. Even as Shelley, Thoreau, in one of his many entries, extends and revises the image—

> A spirit sweeps the string of the telegraph-harp, and strains of music are drawn out endlessly like the wire itself. We have no need to refer music and poetry to Greece for an origin now. . . . The world is young, and music is its infant voice. I do not despair of such a world where you have only to stretch an ordinary wire from tree to tree to hear such strains drawn from it by New England breezes as make Greece and all antiquity seem poor in melody—

revised here, specifically, into an allegory of American inspiration.

Yet Thomas Hardy, in "The Darkling Thrush," that fine poem of guarded affirmation, presents us with a hopeless wintry landscape of the dark opening of the twentieth century, in which the incapacity of the old wind harp image itself to mean anything becomes part of the poetic problem of affirming. When the scene itself *is like* "the century's corpse outleant," and "Stems of woodbines scored the sky / Like strings of broken lyres"—these being not the used-up imagery of neoclassical verse, but of post-Shelleyan images become all-but-neoclassically clichéd as well—how can one hail the new year, the new century?

Like these mingled tropes of light and sound, wind and string, in the Aeolian Harp, those of the natural symphony from Spenser through Whitman proceed as well by creative revision rather than by "development." The most remarkable poetics of revision in our modern poetry is the work of Wallace Stevens, who stands, in this regard, for the quickened conscience of all American imagination today. The theatre of trope, in which, from his bench of catalepsy, the poet hears how the west wind had been—and, transumptively revised, could still be—the music, had given thought years earlier to this problem.

In "The Idea of Order at Key West," the voice of a singing female spirit and the "constant cry" of the sea are brought into a new relation. "The sea was not a mask. No more was she," says the poet, denying that either was an easy or conventional symbol of something else, that some other voice sounded through the mere persona of sea or singer. But then, even the romantic image of the mingled measure—a duet, or possibly a trio—is superseded in this refusal to surrender to the older figuration:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The song and water were not medleyed sound
Even if what she sang was what she heard,
Since what she sang was uttered word by word.
It may be that in all her phrases stirred
The grinding water and the gasping wind;
But it was she and not the sea we heard.

Like all major poetry that must grant it is fiction and not fact, figurative and not literal, these lines nevertheless must claim that they are not "mere" metaphor as well. The song and water were not medleyed sound, and Stevens is not Shelley; what is uttered word by word is not mere noise; and yet, and yet—the prior imagery of the mingled measure of voice and natural noise must be grasped first in order to be rejected for something beyond. Anglo-American romantic tradition propounded the mingled measure as sounding beyond "mere music." I have only sketched the outlines of this figure in this essay, but there is much more to be said of how metaphoric music transcends the literalness even of that most poetic of music, the purely and abstractly instrumental, in poetic history. The music of sound; the music of noise; the music of silence itself could fill a whole chapter of such an account, for *acoustic silence*, not being able to *hear* anything, as opposed to an ancient concept of *rhetorical silence*, or refraining from saying anything, is a fairly modern idea. It becomes important in literature at about the same time that noise does; Edgar Allan Poe, in "Al Araaf," a bad poem that is nevertheless not without interest, tries to work a transumption of the music of the spheres—silenced through being demystified by silence long ago—by describing an echoing voice of the cosmos, "solemnly pervading the calm air! / A sound of silence on the startled ear"—where the phrase means "silent sound," "the sound of silenced [both rhetorically and acoustically] spheres," and more as well. Indeed, in the theatre of musical trope of the nineteenth century, for a poet like Browning, the metaphoric music of music itself is poetically available. Attentive, and technically and aesthetically informed musical listening is an intricate trope in Browning's poetry for consciousness, for meditative or erotic attention, whether revising Renaissance imagery or inventing its own from the technical facts of actual music.

But even for Browning, poetic music cannot be "mere." In order to survive, the mingled measure must undergo the kind of revisionary change—altered, as Stevens put it, "word by word"—of poetry making something more of the metonymy of "sing" for "write" that had descended from antiquity. I shall draw the curtain now on this theatre of trope with a few lines from a late poem by Browning, "Thamyris Marching" (actually, part of a longer one). A blind poet of antiquity, doomed but nonetheless somehow triumphant—and as such, any modern poet—is hailed in a tone of questioning rather like Stevens's:

What wind arrived with all the rhythms from plain,
Hill, dale and that rough wildwood interspersed?
Compounding these to one consummate strain,

It reached him, music; but his own outburst
of victory concluded the account,
And that grew song, which was mere music erst

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

—or, that became figurative which was merely literal first. It is the mereness of the music that demanded, for the poet in English, the mingling of trope. "Music is feeling then, not sound," says Stevens's poet, Peter-Quince-at-the-Clavier. If music is to mean what poetry does, then it must be heard metaphorically as well; or (and perhaps we can let the other music-lover among the poets have the very last word here) as Whitman says in "Proud Music of the Storm,"

> I hear not the volume of sound merely, I am moved by the exquisite meanings,
> I listen to the different voices winding in and out, striving, contending with fiery vehemence to excell each other in emotion;
> I do not think the performers know themselves—but now I think I begin to know them.

References

[1]For a discussion of this figure of allusive revision, see my book, *The Figure of Echo* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), pp. 113-49.

[2]See his *The Mirror and the Lamp* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1953), pp. 51-52.

[3]Robert Frost, "Never Again Would Birds' Song Be the Same."

[4]Written in 1709, but not published until later.

[5]Detailed considerations of musical and acoustical imagery in some of these writers can be found in my previously published studies, including *Images of Voice* (Cambridge: W. H. Heffer, 1970); "Wordsworth and the Music of Sound," in *New Perspectives on Coleridge and Wordsworth*, edited by Geoffrey H. Hartman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1972), pp. 41-84; "Browning and the Music of Music," *Strivers' Row* 1.1 (1974): 36-56; and "Tennyson's Melody," *Georgia Review* 29 (1975): 676-703.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

JOHN R. BOLY

Auden and the Romantic Tradition in *The Age of Anxiety*

> Perhaps this is where we shall yet discover the realm of our invention, that realm in which we also still can be original, say as parodists of world history and the clowns of God—perhaps, even if nothing else today has a future, our laughter may yet have a future.
>
> Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*

> But he who wills in a religious sense must have a receptive attitude towards the terrible, he must open himself to it, and he has only to take care that it does not stop halfway, but that it leads him into the serenity of the infinite.
>
> Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*

AUDEN'S VISION OF ROMANTIC ORIGINS IS COMPLEX, but it is possible to get an overview of his position by using as our major texts three of his works, *The Prolific and the Devourer*, *The Enchafed Flood*, and *The Dyer's Hand*. Essentially, Auden saw romanticism as embodying the main dilemma of Western culture. In the Renaissance, a new humanism, intent upon championing the heroic individual, discarded the impediments of medieval Catholicism's authoritarian church and absolutist metaphysics. It was to be the era of rational man, distrustful of what could not be seen and touched, secure in his newfound powers of empirical method and scientific invention.

The official faith of the new humanism, Auden maintained, was the Protestant religion, which he tended to associate with a Calvinist expediency. Protestantism, in Auden's view, did not mean the nonexistence of metaphysical absolutes and spiritual reality, but it did mean their irrelevance. Accordingly, the Protestant compromise split the new humanist into an outer man governed by reason and the profit motive, and an inner man governed by sentiment and such glimpses of the divine light as grace and election vouchsafed. The outer man soon discovered that reason could justify anything, so he often became a hypocrite ruled by the genteel coercion of respectable appearances. The inner man, cast alone into the underworld of the subconscious, suffered the worse fate of perennial guilt. Without the symbols and liturgies of the discarded

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Catholicism—which during the post-Tridentine period was itself becoming emptily formalized—he had no mythic guide through the labyrinth of his own inwardness. Harrowing hell on his own, Protestant man discovered anew the depths of his depravity. He also discovered anew, well before Freud, the technique of ignoring that depravity through repression and its displacements.

Romanticism emerged as the new humanism's response to its own sense of discontent and failure. As would be expected in an empirical culture, romanticism began with an indisputable factual observation: the world created by a cold and calculating rationalism was a wasteland of dead mechanism and compulsive repetition, Blake's dark Satanic mills. In a double heresy, romanticism thus rejected both the Protestant split between outer and inner man and the rationalist faith in the sole privilege of reason to govern the external world. "The whole complex of ideas which we call romanticism," Auden wrote in *The Prolific and the Devourer*, "is the attempt of Protestantism to find its own brand of Catholic unity, as the evil effects of separating the private and public life become apparent."[1] Henceforth, the real man of inwardly discovered passion and energy was to turn the fallen world into the New Jerusalem. But after its always brilliant beginnings, the romantic theocracy of inwardness soon ran into serious trouble. It in effect unleashed the Protestant nightmare of a guilt-ridden, hag-ridden subconscious into the daylit, conscious world. At first, this unleashing was symbolic, an aesthetic liberation of new and exciting energies. But eventually Caliban leapt off the stage and into the audience. Rightly or wrongly, Auden saw the English and European political arena of the thirties, together with its disastrous aftermath in the following decade, as the grim proving ground of romantic kerygma. In a famous passage from "Spain 1937," he pointedly rejected romanticism's naive faith that the god of unleashed desire could build a New Jerusalem:

> What's your proposal? To build the Just City? I will,
> I agree. Or is it the suicide pact, the romantic
> Death?[2]

One could easily argue against this too simple view (as Auden himself did in *New Year Letter*), but that would be beside the point. With so radical a critic, the important thing is to find the threatening truth within his hyperboles.

Auden realized that both rationalism and romanticism were offshoots of the same Renaissance humanism, and as such, both attempted to found an absolute system on the capacities of a finite creature. But it is an ancient paradox that man, whether as mind or soul, is neither autonomous nor complete. When he tries to be, he becomes the victim either of a lifeless objectivity or an inchoate subjectivity. Romantic heretics were quick to see the limits of rational humanism, and every visionary since Blake has in one way or another resisted the "mind-forg'd" manacles that chain the imagination to a dead world of space and time. But as humanists themselves, they were slower to learn that the energies imprisoned in the subconscious, though as necessary as reason, were also incapable of delivering finite man from his plight of mortality. The romantic humanist, intent upon self-divinization, had to pretend that desire was

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

creatively godlike and somehow eternal. Yet romantic demonologies, from Coleridge's Christabel to Eliot's Belladonna, proved the Protestant truth that desire was as readily destructive; and the notorious brevity of romantic inspiration, significantly the most obsessive theme of the new movement, proved that desire was tragically short-lived. Romantic humanism was consequently forced into a complex strategy of repression, in which its god was paradoxically denied through a truncated mythos, and its fears displaced into a compensatory poetics.

It took Auden most of the thirties to work out his objections to both rationalist and romantic versions of humanism, and as is well known, at the end of that decade he converted to Christianity. This may be seen, depending upon one's interpretive standpoint, either as a radical departure or a cowering retreat. Here I would suggest that Auden's conversion arose from his determination to regain contact with the strength of romantic origins, and that a decisive literary influence on his conversion was the mythmaking of William Blake. Auden discovered through Blake a visionary theism, closely related to the *philosophia perennis* of mystical religion, that formed within romanticism a countermovement to its humanist origins. Such theism is not involved with the moralistic and dogmatic codes of orthodox religion, for which Auden had as little regard as did Blake for Deism, or Kierkegaard for Christendom. Still less is it to be confused with such pseudomysticisms as vitalism, pantheism, or occultism, which are simply displaced projections of subconscious energies. Rather, the center of this theism is to be found in an absolute and enabling love, whose creative power is best thought of as the realizing consciousness—infinite, because containing all places, and eternal, because containing all times—that is therefore the absolute ground of the individual consciousness. This is the "I" as pure subject rather than relative object, the final perceiver presupposed by any perception, who dwells in the eternal moment and is symbolized as God. To the visionary theist, the crisis is not in finding this absolute, but in withstanding its relentless presence. And for those few who can, the perception of the jumbled fragments of space and time gives way to the discovery of eternity, the archetypal symbols and mythic patterns of involution and evolution.

Blake portrays this act of discovery in his great monomyth of creation and fall, redemption and apocalypse. Although there has been a critical tendency to set Blake apart from the other romantics, his splendidly elaborated myth traces the same recurrent passage that Geoffrey Hartman has found most crucial to all romantic and postromantic poetry, leading "from self-consciousness to imagination."[3] Within this passage, humanism as the despairing divinization of finite faculties gives way to the enabling presence discovered in visionary theism. To use Blake's virtual ideograph, natural Orc gives way to divinely empowered Los. And Blake is not alone. Shelley's Prometheus bound must give way to Prometheus unbound; Keats's Hyperion, to Apollo; Wordsworth's solitary, to the wanderer. Nor does romantic theory necessarily lag behind romantic practice. In Coleridge's brilliant deconstructive analysis of poetic inspiration in the *Biographia Literaria*, both rationally bound fancy and subconsciously bound Secondary Imagination must give way to the mystical presence dwelling in the Primary Imagination. To pursue Hartman's argument

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

a bit further, romanticism in such apocalyptic passages betrays its humanist origins by recovering the sense of an absolute and enabling metaphysical ground, a ground beyond the subconscious psyche and its energies.

The interplay within romanticism of its theist and humanist elements is a fascinating process. But for our purposes, it suffices to note that Auden saw the tradition as gradually succumbing, in its later postromantic and modernist phases, to the humanist limitations inherent in its historical emergence. It tried to pretend that Orc or one of his relatives—Dionysus, Eros, Prometheus, or Priapus—was God. And since they were not, it was paradoxically forced to dismember and scatter the very gods it was supposed to liberate. Romantic humanism thus became a kerygma of repression, whose main liturgical acts were the inhibition and subsequent exaltation of desire, which was not deified but only displaced, and which became dangerously deformed in the process.[4]

This is an extreme claim, but Auden's reading of the romantic tradition has been recently corroborated by one of the most adventurous of romanticism's critics. In his theoretical studies since *The Anxiety of Influence*, Harold Bloom has powerfully explored the romantic humanist's, or strong poet's, retrojection of anxiety from the mortal terminus that he cannot control, to the poetic origins that he can at least pretend to. Since absolute self-sufficiency would confer immortality, Bloom argues, the strong poet is hellishly bent on apotheosizing himself through some myth of self-derivation. But unfortunately, every poet knows that poems are made, not out of nothing, but out of other poems. Hence, the poet's path to the Eden of self-derivation is blocked by some Covering Cherub of a precursor. (Derived from Ezekiel, 28: 13-16, the Covering Cherub symbolizes the repressive fears and compensating delusions that prevent man from reaching the Tree of Life.) This ancestral figure enforces the confession of derivation, the mortality implicit in a coming into, and therefore a going out of, time, which the strong poet is doomed to deny. In the melancholy logic of romantic humanism, then, poetry lapses into a sadistic cycle in which the death-dealing precursor must be repressed, slain, and then guiltily imitated. The cycle is entropic as well, charting a general deterioration in the tradition, because the slain ancestor is ultimately another Orc, a figure of the poet's own lost energies. As Bloom sums up in *Poetry and Repression:* "Poetry, revisionism, and repression verge upon a melancholy identity, an identity that is broken afresh by every new strong poem, and mended afresh by the same poem."[5] So inevitable is this logic, that Bloom, a painstaking and acute reader of texts, has convincingly shown its manifestation in a sixfold syntagm of modes and tropes that dominate post-Enlightenment poetry.

The difference between Auden's earlier deconstruction of romantic humanism and Bloom's later, more pessimistic version is the difference between the pure critic and the poet-critic. As an aspiring visionary, Auden had a personal stake in liberating poetry from the crippling consequences of romantic repression. To enable that liberation, he resorted to an adventurous misreading of Freud, a misreading he later supplanted with one of the few hopeful elements in Kierkegaard's anguished dynamic of faith. In an important article, "Psychology and Art To-Day," published in 1936, Auden acknowledged the subtle, but unvarying, disguises of displacement with which repression defends itself: con-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

flation, inversion, reemphasis, and of course symbolization. But in noting the difference between fantasy and art, Auden insisted that art, because it emerges from a unified cultural system with a coherence of its own, is capable of forcing displacement to become self-revelatory. Analyzing the dream of a morphia addict, which impressed him as belonging more to art than fantasy, Auden wrote: "Not only has the censor transformed the latent content of the dream into symbols but the dream itself is no longer a simple wish fulfillment, it has become constructive, and, if you like, moral" (*EA*, p. 336). The agent of repression, the defensive censor of the imperiled ego, frantically or cleverly displaces; but then the dream itself, the means of repression, subverts the censor by revealing the truth through those displacements. Auden ends by imputing to Freud the questionably Freudian notion that *repression is not cyclical but teleological and even self-limiting:* "Not only what we recognise as sin or crime, but all illness, is purposive. It is an attempt at cure" (*EA*, p. 340). Freud at times saw the analyst, armed with the rationally explicative devices that Jung found so inadequate, as the hero, a restorer of the mature and adult ego. But Auden's metaphor of cure finds within the very process of displacement a revelatory and potentially evolutionary force.

This misreading of Freud brings us to the threshold of *The Age of Anxiety*, its intratextual dialogue with the romantic tradition, and its strategy of restoration. Nietzsche is the dark metaphysician of romantic repression, in that his doomed cycles offer to late humanism its main alternative to the void. In his prophecy of universal parody, Nietzsche gave the modern artist a dismal choice between explicitly accepting his mortal futility by remaining silent, or implicitly accepting that futility by mimicking exhausted forms. Yet what appears as a fate of compulsive parody to the humanist is to his theist counterpart an irrepressible process of literary evolution. The dream is waking the dreamer up. In his title, *The Age of Anxiety*, Auden establishes the concept of distinct and successive cultural periods. Not anxiety as pure, unchangeable fact, but as one of those phases that always seem permanent, yet never are. The justification for this evolutionary process is found in the Kierkegaardian metatexts, *Either/Or* and *The Concept of Dread*, which Auden invokes against the Nietzschean cycle of parody. For Kierkegaard, anxiety arises from a simultaneous awareness and refusal of the unrealized. Now, anxiety can be interrupted—in which case the result is some form of despair—but it cannot be indefinitely continued, because its tormented awareness eventually leads to the absolute ground realized in faith.[6] It cannot end, as in Nietzsche, with a compulsive cycle driven by the desperate repression of a mortal emptiness. In terms of literary evolution, then, Auden's title invokes a force that must drive the romantic tradition's melancholy mimicries into the more terrifying realm of visionary discovery.

This is precisely what happens in Auden's long, subtle, and much neglected poem. Each of the four central sections implicitly acknowledges Nietzsche's dark prophecy, by committing itself to a parody of some clearly signaled aspect of romantic repression. As with all parody, these sections carry on an intratextual dialogue with a tradition so recognizable as to be assumed, for parody is a late product of canon formation. But Auden introduces into this dialogue a deftly analytical symbolism, through which the parody deconstructs

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

the cycle of repression by revealing the very truth it attempts to conceal. *The Age of Anxiety* is, of course, splendid as a poem; but it is even more splendid as an ambitious deconstructive compendium that, through its status as literature, actually carries out the literary evolution made possible by its discovery of the latent power of displacement.

* * *

The action begins in a shabby bar on New York's Third Avenue, where Auden's four adventurers happen to meet while drowning their sorrows. These are Malin, a hypercritical scientist who is a medical intelligence officer; Quant, an elderly clerk with a casual, but wide-ranging, knowledge of mythologies; Rosetta, a successful department-store buyer who habitually daydreams about the idyllic childhood she never had; and Emble, a handsome young sailor who is terrified that he will not become an officially recognized success. It has been shown that a proximate source for Auden's characterization is Jung's fourfold division of the psyche.[7] In this case, Malin would be intellect; Quant, intuition; Rosetta, feeling; and Emble, sensation.

But this fourfold scheme also establishes a profound connection with the romantic tradition, in that it recalls Blake's four Zoas, or giant forms, Urizen, Urthona, Luvah, and Tharmas. And to go beyond even Blake, the presence of this quaternary sets the fundamental problem that both forms of romanticism assume: man has fallen from a state of preconscious unity into one of self-conscious division. Symbolically, the fall is dramatized in the four rivers of Eden, which, though rising from a single fountain at the base of the Tree of Life, mysteriously flow into the perceptual passivity of Coleridge's sunless sea. In this way, the fall becomes the demonic creation that brings forth the "reality" in which most men dwell, a nightmare world where desire is repressed, distorted, and then projected into the tyrannizing delusions of objectivity. But Auden reveals his refusal to accept this fallen condition by having his four characters meet on the Eve of All Souls, traditionally a time of prayer, when those tormented in Purgatory might be released into Paradise. Or, to translate from the Roman Missal into the terms of romantic inwardness, All Souls contains the determination, not to unleash, but to transform and restore, the energies of the psyche that are imprisoned within the cycles of repression.

That transformation is a major, in fact, an apocalyptic task. Auden takes his epigraph from Thomas à Celano's *Dies Irae*, and this provides his poem with both a visionary context and a summary of its argument. The wrath in the Day of Wrath is not God's, but man's, and the judge in the Day of Judgment is God-in-man, the divinity of the spirit. As pretense and evasion burn away in the fires of a new visionary perspective, the *saeclum*, or epoch, created in the fall comes to an end. Auden's epigraph thus prefaces his absolute confrontation with romantic humanism. Since this humanism in some way involves every major poet from Wordsworth to Eliot, Auden can hardly be accused of timidity. Yet there is also a quietly analytical aspect to his deconstructive Day of Judgment, in that *Dies Irae* is also *dies illa*, that day, in the mythic sense of containing a continuously present truth. What Auden proposes to reveal about romantic humanism is only what has always been revealed in its own displacements.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The intratextual struggles effectively commence with "The Seven Ages," in which Malin, as a combination of airman, medical scientist, and social commentator, leads the others through a modernized version of the triumph of life. Auden begins, then, at his own beginning, since Malin recalls three of Auden's early personae, and even sounds like them. He speaks in a combination of what M. K. Spears has labeled Auden's clipped lyric and Nordic Mask, thereby echoing the acerbic, yet fatalistic, choruses of *Paid on Both Sides* and some of *Poems 1930*.[8] Malin thus suggests Auden-as-modernist, and it is upon modernism as a development of late humanist despair that the parodic analysis fastens.

This lateness is a matter of symbolic self-perception, not literal chronology, so it will vary in form according to the intensity of the poet's dissatisfaction with his tradition. As noted, Harold Bloom has acutely traced the pattern in which the later poet represses and then guiltily imitates the precursor who stands between him and the illusion of self-derivation. But because Bloom so closely follows Freud, who in matters of man's cyclical fate and parodic destiny tended to be Nietzsche's disciple, he underestimates the transformative powers of displacement, with the result that he neglects some of the most fascinating developments within romantic humanism. At first, the precursor is indeed repressed. But eventually he rises from his vestigial presence as trope to a symbolic reappearance as the murderous father: Arnold's Rustum, Hardy's Doomsters, Yeats's Cuchulain. Again, this reappearance has nothing to do with literal chronology, since it is possible to glimpse the evil precursor much earlier in the Scottish King of Coleridge's epigraph to the Dejection Ode—significantly, a reply to Wordsworth—who frivolously sends Sir Patrick Spence to his death. In a subsequent development, the even more deeply enshadowed, but now embittered, poetic heir begins to curse this doom-inflicting ancestor, as in the old man of Coleridge's "Limbo," the Jupiter of Shelley's *Prometheus Unbound*, or the implicit D. H. Lawrence of Auden's own "Prologue."

Rationalistic Malin is happily unaware of the deeper evasions implicit in his repression, but Quant, as occasional Los—or intuition—uses his eclectic mythography to assess Malin's sense of abandonment. In his own parodic version of the ancestor curse, Quant exposes the late humanist's bitterness and hostility toward his tradition as a case of self-inflicted loss:

> His myths of Being
> Are there always. In that unchanging
> Lucid lake where he looks for ever
> Narcissus sees the sensitive face
> He's too intelligent to trust or like,
> Pleading his pardon. Polyphemus
> Curses his cave or, catching a nymph,
> Begs for brotherhood with a big stick,
> Hobbledehoy and helpless. Kind Orpheus lies
> Violently slain on the virid bank,
> That smooth sward where he sinned against kind,
> And, wild by the water, women stone
> The broken torso but the bloody head,
> In the far distance, floating away
> Down the steady stream, still opening

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Its charming mouth, goes chanting on in
Fortissimo tones, a tenor lyre
Dinning the doom into a deaf Nature
Of her loose chaos. For Long-Ago has been
Ever-After since Ur-Papa gave
The Primal Yawn that expressed all things
(In His Boredom their beings) and brought forth
The wit of this world. One-Eye's mistake
Is sorry He spoke.[9]

The various fates of Narcissus, Polyphemus, and Orpheus suggest the poetic types of sensitive plant, buffoon, and sacrificial victim. A masterpiece of satirical concision, the passage suggests the peril of the too-facile assumption that Auden simply accepted modernism. Neglected Echo shows Narcissus's preference for vague and watery fantasies; mocking Galatea shows Cyclops's inattention to effective form—one of Auden's particular concerns. But it is Orpheus who is most interesting. He sings Blake's great visionary theme, that the chaos of passively perceived nature is destined to be transformed into a place of human significance. Yet his song is totally without power, a head without a body, because Orpheus has chosen powerlessness. In dismembering him, the Maenads of Quant's revision simply dramatize the sterility of Orpheus's own radical refusals, for they have discovered him, the mythic inventor of homoeroticism, sinning against kind on the banks of the eternal stream. Quant's revelation that the modernist has somehow chosen his fate of visionary powerlessness prepares the way for the more penetrating symbolic analysis of his conclusion.

Adapting Hesiod, Quant portrays the romantic ancestor supposedly responsible for the modernist's malaise as a combination of Cronus and Cyclops (Ur-Papa is also One-Eye). This cursed ancestor has the unlovable qualities of one of Hardy's deities, in that his maddening stupidity is enforced by irresistible power. His later offspring easily surpass him by replacing glottal yawn with articulate speech. But in doing so, they helplessly fall victim to an inwardness that brings with it not only the superiority of refinement and subtlety, but as well, an incapacitating sorrow, Auden's code word for guilt. The ancestor curse, then, revises in its own way the passage from powerful origins to the mysterious blessings of sterility and loss. This is exactly contrary to the apocalyptic passage from self-consciousness to imagination that Hartman describes; yet from Wordsworth's Immortality Ode onward, it has provided the normative mythos for romantic humanism.

Auden does not, however, intend to leave this regressive and truncated mythos unchallenged. Cronus and Cyclops, as Quant would surely know, are not the same figure, but father and son. By merging them into the confused identity of the romantic ancestor, Quant shows that the incapacitating filiation is really a projection. In other words, the ancestor is not a separate figure at all, but a justificatory symbol for the later poet's powerful denial of his own energies. The real anxiety, as Blake insisted in his symbolism of malevolent giants, is not of influence, but of having to realize one's own deep and perplexing inwardness.[10]

Yet if we look even further into Quant's deconstructive symbolism, it becomes apparent that such anxiety must lead sooner or later beyond itself. The

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

preposterous Ur-Papa is not merely a Hardyesque spinner of Maya, but also a vital and creative force. His glottal yawn recalls the Johannine Logos, visionary theism's symbol of the enabling presence through which eternity enters into time. Through this presence, Ur-Papa in fact accomplishes what his impotent offspring cannot. He gives, expresses all things, and brings forth life in a burst of creative generosity. The announced filiation thus contains a double descent, somewhat akin to a gnostic emanation, in which Ur-Papa emerges from the Logos, and then impotent heir, from Ur-Papa. At the risk of being obvious, Quant has shown that the energies explored by romanticism can create and then transform an entire world if those energies are sustained by a reality beyond humanism. But those same energies, if left purely to themselves, can bring forth only a repressed and enervated progeny, a progeny for whom the mythoi of self-justification are more congenial than the Battles of Eden. Thus the irony of the defeatism concealed behind an anxiety of influence becomes clear. Since empowered Ur-Papa is really a projection, he represents a possibility of poetic regeneration that, though doubly displaced from present to past and from self to other, has been unceasingly available.

At the end of "The Seven Ages," Auden is still a long way from his promised apocalypse. But we can begin to see how the revelations of this literary Last Judgment will emerge. The playful exaggerations and exuberance of his parody, which have persuaded some sober-minded critics to dismiss *The Age of Anxiety*, release the mythic and symbolic elements into an almost giddy literary freedom. But Auden's genius was to see that within such freedom, myth and symbol could not merely retain, but even more powerfully exercise, their formidably analytical capacities. Parody and mythopoesis thus work together in this text to carry out a thorough and frankly relentless deconstruction of humanist deceptions.

* * *

The other three characters have been growing increasingly suspicious of Malin's jaundiced self-pity, so at the end of this section they rebel, by having Rosetta as palingenetic Luvah, or feeling, lead them back to the strength of their origins. This produces "The Seven Stages," an at times surrealistic dream sequence that figures the katabasis, or descent, inward, to recover the source of unconscious energies. The surrealism is important, because it enables a juxtaposition of childishness and brutality, that in turn suggests the alternately naive and destructive quality of untransformed desire. It also locates the humanist quest for origins in the labyrinth of the Freudian subconscious, and predictably, it is a brooding monster, not regenerative innocence, that the four discover within themselves. Freud is virtually the nemesis of romantic humanism, because he exposed, with such bright candor, so many of its treacherous illusions. This is particularly true of his theory about the conservative nature of instinct. Since all desire (with the questionable exception of the sexual instinct) is regressive, an attempt to regain an earlier state, and since the earliest possible state is nonexistence, Freud reasoned that desire must be ultimately thanatic, a death wish, or willing to end willing.[11] Thus, in any system where the primordial force, however ingeniously displaced, is the soul's

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

unconscious energies, a quest for origins must become a quest for some form of death. Auden accordingly has his parodic humanists set out for a Freudian idyll of soothing Thanatos, "The Quiet Kingdom" beyond the "Regressive road to Grandmother's House" (*CP*, p. 371).

The Narrator provides an indispensable cue for interpreting the symbolism of "The Seven Stages," when he explains that the four search for "that state of prehistoric happiness which, by humans beings, can only be imagined in terms of a landscape bearing a symbolic resemblance to the human body" (*CP*, p. 371). The mythologem of world as body is complex, but its apocalyptic quality as a figure of visionary potential is its central significance. Auden draws here on a tradition that includes the Adam Kadmon of the Kabbalah, the giant Ymir of the Elder Edda, the One Man of Emerson's *American Scholar*, and the Cosmic Man of Whitman. The world in human form symbolizes the dissolution of subject-object distinctions in the liberating realization that knowledge is a function of being, that all man ever has seen or ever will see is his own projected inwardness. A symbol of this realization must be gigantic, because it contains the strength to recreate the world through the transformation of that inwardness. The giants assume human form, because they show that one process of involution and evolution, the fall into time and the redemption into eternity, animates all reality. Typically, though, they are asleep, because the visionary finds human powers entranced within the illusions of time and space. It is of the greatest significance for Auden's deconstruction that in the postromantic tradition of late humanism, this visionary potential is seen, not as sleeping, but as dismembered or slain: the murdered landscape of Browning's "Childe Roland," the dead winterscape of Hardy's "The Darkling Thrush," the patient awaiting dissection that Eliot borrowed from Zola for "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," or the Adam's Grave that Auden ironically establishes as sentinel for the divided city of Western culture in "Vespers," from *Horae Canonicae*.

In "The Seven Stages," this tradition is parodically continued as Auden's four questers explore a literalized anatomy, whose energies are so dispersed, that there is no sign the sleeper will ever wake again. Sometimes the anatomy is a bit uncertain, but a reasonable reconstruction of the journey that gives rise to the seven stages would be: Mariner's Tavern (heart); Rival Ports (lungs); City (brain); Big House (womb); Graveyard (skeleton); Hermetic Gardens (sex organs); and Forest and Desert (intestines). This is a profound decline from the work's initial figuration of fallen man as composed of four imaginative faculties. The movement from imaginative to physical, as well as from quaternary to septenary, reveals in the ideographic language of symbolism the loss of energies within this thanatic quest. For the giant to be awakened, in at least one tradition, he must be touched by a ray of sunlight shining into his burial crypt—the slumber of visionary powers within the mundane skull—at dawn on the shortest day of the year. But even by All Souls, that day is still far off.

The poetry of "The Seven Stages" is as precise, yet subtle, as any Auden wrote. Though it is not possible here to examine all of it in depth, some sense can be given of its intratextual penetration. Rosetta at the end of the first stage aptly sees its goal as a mountainous landscape, symbol of the sacred locus of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

revelation from Wordsworth's Snowden to Stevens's hill in Tennessee. But Rosetta's coy diction, parenthetic syntax, and lingering description suggest a Keatsian or Swinburnian pastiche that is more suited to a child's savoring of forbidden delights:

> Now peaks oppose to the ploughman's march
> Their twin confederate forms,
> In a warm weather, white with lilies,
> Evergreen for grazing.
>
> Smooth the surfaces, sweeping the curves
> Of these comely frolic clouds,
> Where the great go to forget themselves
> The beautiful and boon to die.
>
> (*CP*, p. 373)

Through their obvious association with breasts, Rosetta's mountains reveal as goal the petrifying maternity, cold, hard, and destroying, of untransformed nature. Certainly, the visionary must begin, as Wordsworth insisted, in nature's tutelary embrace. Yet in Christian mythography, this embrace is the swaddling clothes that entwine the infant Christ, a covering that later becomes the death shroud that must be torn off and left in the tomb. Expressly opposing the mountains, and here thwarted by them, is the figure of the ploughman as visionary. The ploughman's turning over the mundane shell of the natural world is a powerful metaphor that shows the mental activity that gives life to the symbolic seeds or archetypal bones buried within phenomena.[12] On the mountain as stony breast of perceptual passivity, there is no such ploughing, only the grazing of the common herd.

Once this basic symbolism has been grasped, Auden's intratextual precision becomes clear. The juxtaposition of ploughman and mountains recalls the same symbolic pairing in Wordsworth's "Resolution and Independence," where he too mourned the death of vision in the fates of Chatterton and Burns. But Wordsworth's vexed response, his heroic assertion that "by our own spirits are we deified," contains the fundamental ambivalence between humanism and theism that is the whole subject of *The Age of Anxiety*. Are those spirits the soon-to-be-dissipated unconscious energies that are all too finite? Or, are they rather the eternal presence that is the absolute ground of consciousness itself? Wordsworth sublimely hesitates at this point, which Auden in an earlier poem, "The Watershed," figured as the essential division within romanticism. But in his own four adventurers, Auden shows the fate of those later humanists who were more desperately sure.

The exact center of this thanatic quest is the fourth stage, the Big House, which is symbolically a womb within a womb. Rosetta, as guide, happily explores this, the primordial scene, while the others eagerly await her revelation of the unconscious energies that dwell within. Yet in her report back to the faithful, "Opera glasses on the ormolu table . . ." (*CP*, p. 382), Rosetta concedes that the *genius loci* of romantic humanism is that ugliest of necessary angels, the Covering Cherub. In one form, it appears as a "Frock-coated father," fashioned after Henri Mannier's Monsieur Prudhomme, who shows the mind in compla-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

cent submission to conventional moral authority. Heterodox Auden, like that earlier visionary St. Paul, suspected external moral codes because they could accuse but not transform. The moralist is the inevitable companion of the humanist, because the repressions of the one distort desire, and so necessitate the ever more tyrannical rules of the other. But behind the frock-coated father there waits an even more baleful version of the Cherub in the form of the sadistic deity of Kebroth-Hattaavah (Numbers 11), whose more threatening mien betrays even more paralyzing fears. What is finally being repressed is the terror of mortality, the awful emptiness in the depths of finite man. As romanticism nears this center, its visions of the Covering Cherub must become more enraged and hideous. The reason for this symbolic intensification, which is really an inversion, is that romanticism dreads nothing more than the possibility of actually overcoming the Cherub, and as a result, having to venture beyond the cycles of compulsion that he enables. Auden thus locates this blocking figure, now exposed as a guardian deity, not at the edge, but at the center, of the romantic idyll. Were romanticism to go any further, it would have to go deeper, and leave behind its humanist origins by entering the void beneath even the profoundest reaches of the psyche.

Auden ends "The Seven Stages" with a powerful deconstruction that leaves no doubt about the confinement of the thanatic quest to the scene of repression. Separating into the psychic chaos of fallen man, the four adventurers wander alone through a dark and labyrinthine forest. This is the modern rediscovery of hell as the Freudian subconscious, into which a desperately self-divinizing ego casts the hateful energies that obsess it. At the edge of the forest, the four reunite before a vast desert. The desert as symbol is the companion of the forest, in that it shows the conscious displacements that emerge from the subconscious, both being offsprings of repression. As Auden noted in *The Enchafed Flood*, the desert presents a place where the deformities are not hidden but horribly manifest.[13] Here, inwardness is externalized in scenes of pure projection, as the realizing sun of intellect beats down in all its fury. But in a variation on the temptations of such visionaries as John or Anthony, Auden has his parodic adventurers fall in love with their demons:

> Boring and bare of shade,
> Devoid of souvenirs and voices,
> It takes will to cross this waste
>
> Which is really empty: the mirage
> Need not be tasty to tempt;
> For the senses arouse themselves,
>
> And an image of humpbacked girls
> Or plates of roasted rats
> Can make the mouth water.
>
> (*CP*, pp. 389-90)

The passage draws on the mythologem of the Messianic banquet, where angels wait on the visionary company as they consume those images of gross phenomena, Behemoth, Leviathan, and Ziz. But in Auden's post-Freudian parable of repression, Paradise is still the dry, sterile wasteland of untransformed phenomena, and the closest we get to vision is the mirages, the elusive

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

displacements of the subconsciously obsessed mind. As is usual, Auden deploys his symbolism with the ideographic precision of Blake. The deformed maidens are variations of anima, or the psyche, but instead of being one, they are many, thereby showing divided, distorted, yet irresistible energies. The feast they offer, as alluring alternative to themselves, suggests the appeal of the displacements to which the repressed psyche gives birth. Thus the thanatic quest ends in a revelation of its nature as autophagy—which is apt, since the archetypal symbol for repression is the ouroboros, or snake consuming its tail. This, however, is not quite incisive enough for Auden, so he further stresses the sterile and self-indulgent nature of such grim psychodrama by adding a hint of autoeroticism: "the senses arouse themselves."

At this point, it would be safe to say, we are at the darkest place in Auden's katabasis into the nightmare of romantic humanism. But even here, it is possible to see the powers of displacement silently at work. Had the four not stopped at the edge, but actually crossed the desert, Malin notes, they would have found hidden streams that could restore life and an oasis where acrobats "make unbelievable leaps." In other words, had the four adventurers gone deeper into the symbol itself, they would have realized what its deconstructive ironies were trying to tell them. So Auden's dreadful pun on Kierkegaard's metaphor of faith is entirely to the point. Gradually, but inevitably, the disease is proposing its cure, the dream is waking the dreamer.

* * *

"The Dirge" and "The Masque" retrace the cycle of disillusionment and doomed quest, but now that cycle assumes a more radical and self-limiting character. Malin's bitterness, as has been seen, results from a refusal that brings an end to his heroic possibilities as poet. But whenever the mind cannot create, it must turn to destruction. This occurs as the romantic Prometheanism, in which the frustrated poet, unable to turn his benighted world into the New Jerusalem, begins to wish for the literalized apocalypse that will wreck it. But with the really desperate—because more powerless—Prometheans of modernism, these deformed energies are displaced into a worship of power, and then projected onto some suitable historical candidate. Auden explores this more recent version of Prometheanism in "The Dirge," which commemorates "some Gilgamesh or Napoleon, some Solon or Sherlock Holmes" (*CP*, p. 394). The reference is purposely ambiguous. First generation modernists—Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and Wyndham Lewis—went to the Right; second generation modernists—Spender, Day-Lewis, Rex Warner, and, some have mistakenly thought, Auden himself—went to the Left.[14] But in "The Dirge," it makes little difference, since the colossal father retains an archetype's capacity to inform an indefinite range of intratextual possibilities.

As always, the poetry relies on the readers' ability to detect nuances within the symbolism. For a few lines, which perhaps recall that moment of naive political enthusiasm at the beginning of the thirties, it appears as if the new historical Prometheus will indeed become the hero of romanticism's adventure of inwardness. Riding the white horse of purified desire, he survives the tempests and droughts that represent the alternate fits and calms of subcon-

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

scious energies. His journey of life is what Caliban called the disillusioned, yet still serviceable, metaphor for the continuous meditation that enables the hero to understand those energies (the shrine of gold), to transform their multiple vitalities into a sustaining strength (the waters of joy), and to direct that strength into a process of coherent growth (the tree of life). Perfect, one thinks, until the neatness becomes self-incriminating. The ultimate test for the romantic humanist is to harrow hell, to integrate the psyche. Yet this is impossible without the support of an absolute metaphysical ground that enables the quester to acknowledge all the energies that he has previously repressed. Without such support, the would-be hero can only ignore his nightmares and "put the clawing chimaeras in cold storage." (*CP*, p. 394). He is, in other words, a fresh version of the tormented romantic whose repressed inwardness becomes a monstrous reality. But the chimera's union of lion, goat, and snake suggests desire not only deformed into domination, lust, and intrigue, but also equipped with flight—that is, executive force.

Auden had made the same point as early as 1932 in *The Orators*, an acute study of leadership as neurotic compensation. By 1947, when he wrote "The Dirge," poets had already retreated from their earlier enthusiasms about either the Left or the Right, and hardly needed further warnings. Yet this kind of retreat was not at all what Auden had in mind. His hope was that the disillusionment of the new Prometheanism would lead, not to a severance of art from life and another round of aestheticism, but to a rediscovery of poetry's true visionary task. "The Dirge" ends with the prophetic lines:

> For our lawgiver lies below his people,
> Bigger bones of a better kind,
> Unwarped by their weight, as white limestone
> Under green grass
> The grass that fades.
>
> (*CP*, p. 395)

The movement from lawgiver to bones to limestone carries out the whole supercession intended by the poem. Mircea Eliade has pointed out that bones, far from being a death image, often represent the support of life.[15] In as acutely intratextual a passage as this, which draws on an iconic tradition that includes Ezekiel, Luke, and Blake, that significance can be extended to bones as representative of symbols themselves, since they provide the basic support of meaning. Limestone is, of course, composed of vast numbers of shells and corals, though it may contain vertebrate remains, and it is this aggregate quality that makes it one of Auden's favorite figures for the poet's sustaining archetypes. Out of this ground springs, in a deliberately Whitmanian image, the fleeting growths of incessant displacement. With this in mind, we can see how the passage is trying to show that disillusionment with the new Prometheus may lead to the rediscovery of the true lawgivers, the mythoi and symbols that cannot be made to lie. It was Auden's hope that the failure of a misguided and somewhat vindictive prophetism would, as a self-limiting development of modernism, return poetry to its prophetic task, which grew out of the tradition of visionary theism. That tradition includes, as we see from the dense allusiveness of the above passage, both Testaments as well as Blake and Whitman.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Earlier, in "The Seven Stages," Auden had shown how the humanist quest for the liberation of desire must paradoxically lead to its repression. But what if the quester were to defy the Cherub's flaming sword, which is merely the image of his own fears? Perhaps he could then elude the demons of the subconscious and plunge directly into the pure depths of unconscious energy. That is the possibility, romantic humanism's last, most desperate gamble, explored in "The Masque." The main intratextual source for this section is D. H. Lawrence in his psychological writings and some of his later poetry. Like Auden, Lawrence deeply sensed that the romantic tradition had reached a crisis that could only be overcome through a restoration of its true origins. But unlike Auden, he located those origins, however fascinated with mysticism and comparative mythology he may have been, within humanism. In *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious*, Lawrence based his dismissal of the Freudian nemesis on the distinction between the psychologist's subconscious and his own version of the unconscious. He unceremoniously dubbed the former a sack of horrors, the very antithesis of creativity. But the latter, the unconscious, was to be the unconceptualizable source of pure energy, the romantic fountain of eternal artistic youth. Lawrence's introduction to the American edition of *New Poems* is a paean to this unconscious source, disguised as a tribute to Whitman's free verse:

> Give me the still, white seething, the incandescence and the coldness of the incarnate moment: the moment, the quick of all change and haste and opposition: the moment, the immediate present, the Now. The immediate moment is not a drop of water running downstream. It is the source and issue, the bubbling up of the stream.[16]

The passage is remarkable for its use of two visionary figures, the fountain and the eternal moment, to portray the quite unvisionary worship of a power whose entropic end Lawrence was already struggling to evade, "a drop of water running downstream."

Auden was deeply influenced by Lawrence at the outset of his own career, when he turned to Lawrence's theories in hope of recovering the vitality that Eliotic modernism implied had been irrevocably lost. But by the mid-thirties, Auden had determined that Lawrence's theory of the unconscious was simply not true. Desire, which Auden mythologized as Eros, was not the unfailing fountainhead, but a capricious and unpredictable creature who mysteriously came and went. He was not purely creative, but ambivalent, in that some of his moods were sadistically destructive. And one could even argue that Eros was not a god at all, since his blind impulses lacked either purpose or means, until further directed by that hateful spectre, the self-conscious ego with its powers of memory and reason. To worship so capricious and vulnerable a god was to wind up sooner or later in the sunless sea of Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." It is an interesting irony of literary history that Auden, the most original poet of his generation, spent the first years of his career implicitly working out the symbolism of Coleridge's River Alph, which figures the primordial energies of the psyche in their erratic, unapproachable, and ambivalent character.

As literary form, the masque is well suited to Auden's intratextual purposes, because it suppresses the intellectual aspects of the drama and focuses on a few iconic gestures. The four characters have by now left the bar and arrived at Rosetta's apartment, where she and Emble begin to dance. As palingenetic

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Luvah and Tharmas, feeling and sensation, the couple is to attain at last the *hieros gamos*, the sacred marriage, that in one form or another is the goal of every quest. In this parody of Lawrence, sensation is to become so intensified with unconscious energies, that it shatters the restraints of the ego and so enables an unmediated contact with pure being. Accordingly, Emble has been fortifying himself at the bar's fountainhead of aqua vitae all night. To equate the pursuit of unconscious energies with the effects of heavy drinking is somewhat closer to burlesque than parody, but the equation itself is neither inaccurate nor novel. Emble activates those energies in the same way as did some of the French symbolists and later the English decadents, and with much the same result. Rosetta returns to her apartment, after seeing the others off, to find the would-be prince passed out on her bed. The gesture itself is simple enough, but Auden uses it to conduct an incisive analysis. The descent into pure unconscious energy cannot transform human consciousness, only obliterate it. Thus, despite his vehement rejection of Freud, Lawrence characteristically falls victim to the Freudian nemesis after all, when he concedes that primordial desire is indeed regressive and ultimately thanatic. By figuring this concession as the inert Emble, Auden derives from Lawrence the final paradox of romantic humanism: a finite creature can divinize itself only through some form of self-destruction.

* * *

With the anticlimax of "The Masque," Auden brings his intratextual dialogue to a full stop. Yet it is the very strength of the Freudian nemesis that enables him to break Nietzsche's prophecy of doomed repetition. *Dies Irae* is the final day, not in some literally temporal sense, but in the symbolic sense of attaining, through its destructive insight, a final realization. Thus each section of *The Age of Anxiety* parodically deconstructs romantic humanism in a way that is both successive and self-limiting, until it necessarily reaches the promised apocalypse, which literally means pulling off the covers. The novelty of apocalypse is only a revelation of what has always been the case, and its mystery is only a measure of the mind's habitual entrancement. Beyond this point of absolute clarity, repetition is impossible. The choice is final, life or death, faith or despair. Auden's *Dies Irae* consequently leads to the division within romantic origins where a weary humanism and a visionary theism must part forever.

At this point, the enabling parody drops away, and *The Age of Anxiety* ends with one of the most remarkable passages of visionary poetry in the modern tradition. Rosetta casts her final meditation in the forms of Lurianic Kabbalism; Malin, in the forms of Christian mysticism; and together they enact the necessary restoration. This raises, willy-nilly, the issue of religion, which is unfortunately one of the most misunderstood aspects of Auden's mythography. So it would be best to permit the observation that for the text, at least, religion is not an issue at all. To Rosetta, orthodoxy is merely the spelling out of morals on monuments, a pious process of applying platitudes to someone else. Malin's views on what some of Auden's commentators mean by religion are even stronger:

> Yet the grossest of our dreams is
> No worse than our worship which for the most part

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Is so much galimatias to get out of
Knowing our neighbor.

(*CP*, p. 408)

The visionary alternative is to restore religious symbols and mythoi by realizing that they refer, not to past historical events or to present moral restraints, but to the continuous adventures of human inwardness, or what Keats called the process of soul-making. In this sense, when Wordsworth alternately entitled *The Prelude* as *The Growth of a Poet's Mind*, he was designating himself a religious poet. Wordsworth's great innovation was the mythopoeically technical one of displacing the mind's inward transformations to a low-mimetic symbolism taken from nature. But Auden, arriving at a later and more reflective moment in the tradition, saw how easily such deceptively unrestraining displacements could go astray in so radically post-Protestant, hence individual, a movement as romanticism. He consequently restored the powerful lucidity of religious mythoi and symbols, with their prehumanist wisdom, in his adventure to regain romantic strengths. If this restoration is an act of intellectual cowardice, then Auden is the same kind of coward as Blake, who adopted his mythologies from the Bible and Jacob Boehme. In a similar eclecticism, which shows that he too saw religious symbols as visionary accomplices, Auden deliberately juxtaposes Jewish Rosetta and Christian Malin at the end of *The Age of Anxiety*. Critical attempts to differentiate the two miss the point, which is that both say the same thing.

The most puzzling aspect of Rosetta's meditation is the suddenness of its unexpected transformation. She returns, finds Emble asleep on her bed, and in less than Paul's "twinkling of an eye," the apocalyptic disclosures begin. The entire work has painstakingly prepared for this moment, with an ornateness of symbolism that Auden had warned in advance would be baroque. Yet the shift from humanism to theism, from a world dying to one continuously reborn, is itself no more than a shift in consciousness. Rosetta as key to translation (i.e., the Rosetta stone) looks at Emble as emblem of sense, and sees the mind trapped in the desperate world of mere phenomena, as caught in a sleep of death. Her reference to the exile, "and our words touched / On Babylon's banks" (*CP*, p. 403), figures, in Kabbalistic symbolism, the fate of the soul in its separation from divinity, and its subsequent burial in the lower world of unilluminated matter, or *Malkuth*. Emble is thus the would-be bridegroom, the senses of man that could penetrate to a world of symbols, but in fact enslave him in the place of mortal frustration, until he becomes a murderous sleepwalker.

Yet, within Luria's theogonic concept of *Tsimtsum*, which provides the central form for Rosetta's meditation, limitation and contraction within the divinity precede flowing forth and expansion.[17] Rosetta gives the form of *Tsimtsum* an anthropological and historical application, as Auden, with his limiting deconstructions leading to a restored mythography, may be seen as giving it a literary one. The process in which the *Shekinah*, or divine presence, escapes from its manifestations—in essence, overwhelms and shatters them through excess—is *Sheviroth Ha-Kalim*, or the breaking of the vessels, which is in turn involved with the perplexing origins of evil. In a radical discovery of *Sheviroth*, Rosetta casts it as that most appalling event, the holocaust:

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Nor His strong arm that stood no nonsense,
Fly, let's face it, to defend us now
When bruised or broiled our bodies are chucked
Like cracked crocks onto kitchen middens
In the time He takes.

(*CP*, p. 404)

Auden accepts a considerable risk here, but it is a risk inherent in visionary tradition. The supposedly external, objective, and determined world, to which political fatalists and judicious realists so earnestly preach conformity, is in fact no such thing. It is altogether the creation of the human mind, the projection of the fears, hatreds, and compensations of a culture's entranced sleepwalking through its own botched quests. Yet, despite this realization, the visionary remains an indomitable believer in mankind and perhaps the only true humanist. At a time when decent liberal optimism was as outmoded, in Malin's later phrase, as "peasant pottery" (*CP*, p. 408), Rosetta's next words are the most surprising in the entire poem: "We'll trust." Somehow she has grasped the mysterious pattern in which *Sheviroth* enables *Tikkun*, or the restitution of the defect.

This restitution finds its enabling symbol in the Eye of God, which represents, through transposition, not God as aware of man, but God as aware *through* man—that is, the birth of divine consciousness. Rosetta is a more reticent visionary than Malin, in that she does not attempt to explain the nature of this birth and its mysterious emergence from catastrophe, but leaves no doubt as to its consequences. Many still associate visionary experience with an incommunicable ecstasy, in which individual identity and consciousness are blotted out. What Rosetta experiences, however, is neither incommunicable nor ecstatic. She accepts for the first time the human origins she has been repressing, and with the anxieties created by the hopeless task of self-divinization set aside, she can see the Covering Cherub for the infantile bogey it truly is: "My poor fat father" (*CP*, p. 404). No longer confined within a demon-haunted idyll, Rosetta discovers the obligation of *Tikkun* as the time of desert wandering. The exile with which her meditation begins has thus given way, through the crisis of *Sheviroth*, to the once more searching community:

Moses will scold if
We're not all there for the next meeting
At some brackish well or broken arch,
Tired as we are.

(*CP*, p. 405)

The restitution is real, but so deliberately centered in the Eliotic wasteland, that it suggests a hesitant beginning rather than a serene conclusion. Humanism's Egypt, the fallen world of untransformed matter, is far behind. But just as distant is the New Jerusalem of an entirely visionary culture, and one suspects that the alternations of *Sheviroth* and *Tikkun* will have to occur many times before that destination is reached. Nonetheless, through the transformative power of Rosetta's meditation, the desert has become a place of realization leading to supercession. *Tikkun* occurs at the broken arch, a figure of the triumph that has collapsed into ruin, and from this scene spring the waters of

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

life that restore because they are so bitter. As will become apparent, it is of the greatest significance that Rosetta takes Moses as guide rather than Joshua. The palingenetic Luvah of her creator, Rosetta as feeling can imagine for herself only more wandering in the deserts of supercession, not actual entry into the promised land.

Both Rosetta and Malin enact a restoration of romantic origins to visionary theism, but their iconography is different, even if their mythos is the same. Thus the paradoxical pattern of *Sheviroth* and *Tikkun* is replaced in Malin's meditation with figures of the cross and, not exactly resurrection, but something closer to Eckhart's continuously new birth.[18] Emble as pure sensation had to give way to Rosetta as honest emotion; now Quant, as pure imagination, who weaves his Stevens-like fictions with a rapidity and silliness that betray their pathos, must give way to Malin's somber intellectual absolutes. After dismissing as pious evasions "Religion, Politics, Love," and after foreseeing as "horrid madness" the only future of mankind in which he can any longer believe, Malin abruptly launches into the possibility that such evasions and madness may contain their own resolution. He expresses this insight in a complex passage that joins Christian, Kierkegaardian, and mystical elements:

> Yet the noble despair of the poets
> Is nothing of the sort; it is silly
> To refuse the tasks of time
> And, overlooking our lives,
> Cry—'Miserable wicked me,
> How interesting I am.'
> We would rather be ruined than changed,
> We would rather die in our dread
> Than climb the cross of the moment
> And let our illusions die.
>
> (*CP*, pp. 406-7)

Despite its unusual juxtapositions, the best approach to Malin's meditation is through recollection of the deeper meaning of the cross. Essentially, that symbol uses an obsessive motif from the ancient fertility cults, the dying god hanged on the tree, to conduct an *Ecce Homo*, a final insight into the condition of natural man. Fastened to the wood, as *prima materia* of ordinary phenomena, by the wound of his five delusive senses, the god shows human vitality slain on the tree of life-become-death. The abstract form of the cross, with its regular divisions into contradictory opposites, suggests the perceptual consequences of this death, by showing a world of organized strife. Christianity's version of the hanged-god motif is actually quite restrained, compared to others, where the god is castrated and dismembered to display the impotence and dissipation of natural energies. But the distinctive element in the Christian adaptation of this ancient motif is its achievement of transformation through an essential intellectual insight. The cross as tree of death rises from the place of skulls, in some versions, from a skull itself, to show not only that it is wrought by the fallen mind, but that through the act of realizing what it has wrought, the mind can discover its true origins. This is the center of the *felix culpa*, in Auden's passage figured as Kierkegaard's death in dread: namely, that through a process of understanding, the very emptiness can lead to fullness. To be ruined is to be

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

changed, if only—as Kierkegaard insisted—one is ruined fully enough: when the illusions of the natural man die, the visions of eternity can begin. The cross, then, is, together with the *Sheviroth*, an ultimately deconstructive device, in that both conduct an apocalyptic destruction or stripping away so absolute, that it enables a regeneration, which Malin figures as "the place of birth" (*CP*, p. 407).

This is the point at which even the formidable powers of symbolism begin to falter, and in one last splendid and perplexing passage, Malin ventures still further. Between the ultimate deconstruction and necessary regeneration lies the elusive eternity, the moment in which the quest hero discovers an origin beyond space and time. Malin's justification for this discovery is the scholastic notion that the lower reveals the higher, just as the higher fulfills the lower: man could not desire the infinite unless he in some way already possessed it. But the passage is not really about rational proofs; it is about a metaphysical absolute contained in the human status as

> Temporals pleading for external life with
> The infinite impetus of anxious spirits,
> Finite in fact yet refusing to be real,
> Wanting our own way, unwilling to say Yes
> To the Self-So which is the same at all times,
> That Always-Opposite which is the whole subject
> Of our not-knowing.
>
> (*CP*, p. 408)

Is this simply the "double talk" that Auden indirectly refers to a few lines earlier? Many will see it this way, for not even Blake tried to push poetry beyond symbolism into such pure, absolute definition. Yet within *The Age of Anxiety*, this definition is the other shore finally reached in the night sea-journey through parodic repetition. Auden is not generally regarded as a mystic, and perhaps he was not; but this passage is as frank an exposition of mysticism's central tenet as can be found anywhere, whether in Christian, Judaic, or Eastern sources. The Self-So is Auden's version of such linguistic surds as the *tat tvam asi*, which avow the unity of God and man in the ground of consciousness. This is the irreducible knower, the "I" as pure subject, the final beholder presupposed by every experience. This knower is not to be misidentified either with the objects or capacities of consciousness, for it is the mystery of consciousness itself, or what Western mysticism calls the spirit. Its power of realization directly participates, for the mystic, in the enabling power of love, the supreme consciousness that brings forth all existence. It is a "not-knowing," because the ground of consciousness cannot become an object of consciousness. It is "the same at all times," because, as the presupposition for space and time, it is not affected by their limits. It is "Always-Opposite," because the "I" as pure subject stands aloof from the "I" as dissociated object, which is the ordinary ego consciousness of fallen man, the dying god nailed to the tree of death. Auden concludes his deconstructive compendium, then, with a definition of the mystical absolute that he saw as discovering within the wasteland of late humanism the renewed possibility of a long lost strength and joy.

* * *

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

The Age of Anxiety is an undeniably adventurous work, though its adventure is elemental to the romantic tradition it assesses. The Keats of *Endymion* was responding to the Shelley of *Alastor*, who in turn was engaging the vulnerable optimisms of the early Wordsworth. Yet the extent and vigor of Auden's deconstructions, as well as his clear design of supercession, make him more similar to Blake. That angry visionary also intended to shake Albion from his stupor and call him to his proper heroic adventures, the Battles of Eden. But the comparison raises an important question, since it is Blake's anger, an emotive code for his irrepressible energy, that we miss at the end of Auden's poem. After deconstructing romantic humanism so thoroughly, Auden had certainly earned the right to prophetic utterance, more so in fact than most of the moderns who have attempted to claim it. Rosetta and Malin, however, only suggest the possibility of a new world, not the new world itself. As Malin's homeward-bound train crosses the East River, he catches a glimpse of the early morning sunlight. All the big, promissory symbols of epiphany are there: the return to origins, the bridge to a truly New Country, the dawn of another literary era, and most important, the glory in the dancing sunlight of the now revealed *Shekinah*. Yet the symbols are simply listed by the Narrator, not actually operative in the poetry. It is a long way from the apocalyptic splendors of Blake's Night the Ninth.

I make the comparison with no intention of slighting Auden, but rather to raise a question about the perils of literary evolution. Auden emerges from *The Age of Anxiety* as essentially a Virgil figure, a guide who can lead the lost poet through the depths, but who cannot himself pass the threshold. The implication is that the tasks of deconstruction, especially within as formidable a tradition as romanticism, can become so obsessively demanding, that they exhaust the powers of vision and transformation. The cost of supercession thus becomes prohibitively, even self-defeatingly high as a tradition lengthens. After his own intratextual labors, Blake, in the Epilogue to *Milton*, had collapsed in his garden; but Blake then arose to write *Jerusalem*. For later Auden, the new poetic Jerusalem of realized vision must evidently be built by other hands since he, like Rosetta's guide Moses, takes us only to the vantage from which it is visible. This is an astonishing disclosure for so strong a poet to make at the height of his powers. What is even more astonishing is that Auden had apparently accepted his Virgilian role while still a student at Oxford. Some twenty years before, he had written what could almost serve as a secondary epigraph to *The Age of Anxiety*:

> Cocks crew, and sleeping men turned over.
> Rain fell for miles; ghosts went away.
> The jaw, long dropped, stopped at reply.
>
> (*EA*, p. 442)

The curse of Nietzsche's *apophrades*, the return of the haunting images, is broken as the ghosts depart. But the cost is a silence born of both weariness and disappointment, as the sleeping men, those new and answering voices every visionary hopes for, ignore the summons to awake. Auden's last long poem of the forties, like his entire career, poses a challenge for future poetry, a challenge that may have become an indictment.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

References

[1]*Antaeus* no. 42 (Summer 1981): 49.

[2]*The English Auden*, edited by Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1977), p. 211. Henceforth cited in the text as (*EA*, p. ——).

[3]"Romanticism and Anti-Self-Consciousness," in *Beyond Formalism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 307.

[4]An excellent background study on the relation of repression to mythic tradition is Paul Diel's *Symbolism in Greek Mythology*, translated by Vincent Stuart, Micheline Stuart, and Rebecca Folkman (Boulder, Colorado: Shambhala, 1980), which applies to a body of classical myths the clinical theories of Diel's earlier *Psychologie de la Motivation* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1948). Though not a theist, Diel nonetheless shows that repression originates in a fear of mortality that drives the psyche into a desperate attempt to deify itself through an exaltation of displaced desires. But such exaltation is inseparable from inhibition, because it means ignoring other desires, rather than acknowledging and integrating them. The resulting guilt, which arises from the psyche's recognition of what it has done to itself by imprisoning part of its energies in the subconscious, is what the neurotic is miserably aware of. But guilt is only an effect whose real cause lies in a preceding exaltation, of which the neurotic is typically quite proud. For Diel, the key to understanding repression is to see that its component halves of inhibition and exaltation are both consequences of the same elemental fear, and that each intensifies the other, so that repression becomes a self-perpetuating cycle, symbolized by the ouroboros, or serpent consuming itself.

[5]*Poetry and Repression* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 27.

[6]*The Concept of Dread*, translated by Walter Lowrie (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957). In this work, Kierkegaard began to put aside the literary presentation of his ideas through dramatic personae in favor of a more systematic philosophical treatment. This may account for its considerable impact upon Auden, who was quite comfortable with abstract theory, and habitually planned his longer works as if they were intellectual arguments.

[7]Edward Callan, "Allegory in Auden's *The Age of Anxiety*," *Twentieth Century Literature* 10 (1965): 155-65.

[8]Monroe K. Spears, *The Poetry of W. H. Auden* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1963), pp. 22-23. Cf. Edward Mendelson, *Early Auden* (New York: Viking, 1981), p. xxiii: "When Auden wrote in opposition to the canons of modernism, he did so in the understanding that came of accepting them earlier."

[9]*Collected Poems*, edited by Edward Mendelson (New York: Random House, 1976), pp. 365-66. Henceforth cited in the text as (*CP*, p. ——).

[10]Hartman makes a related point in "Blake and the Progress of Poesy," *Beyond Formalism*, p. 200: "There is no Westering [in Blake]; only an Eastering, an immediacy to the source renewed by each great poet." Don Pease, in his subtly argued "Blake, Crane, Whitman, and Modernism: A Poetics of Pure Possibility," *PMLA (Publication of the Modern Language Association)* 96 (1981): 65, uses this insight to challenge Bloom's claim that anxiety is the inevitable source of strong poetry.

[11]*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition* . . . (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), 18, pp. 36-42.

[12]Chaucer's emblematic ploughman, Langland's Piers, Spenser's etymologically apt St. George, and Blake's Palamabron in *Milton* or Los in *Jerusalem* are primary examples of this figure.

[13]*The Enchafed Flood* (New York: Random House, 1950), p. 20.

[14]D. E. S. Maxwell, *Poets of the Thirties* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1969), Frederick Buell, *W. H. Auden as a Social Poet* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1973), Samuel Hynes, *The Auden Generation* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), and Bernard Bergonzi, *Reading the Thirties* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1978), are all thoughtful studies that grapple with the complex problem of the exact nature of Auden's political involvement during the period 1928-39. The great temptation is to forget that Auden was using apparently public and political references in what was really his quest for a personal and linguistic liberation. Unsurprisingly, this was not understood during a highly politicized decade, and the political interpretations of Auden's contemporaries have generated a tradition of misunderstanding. Frederick Buell indicates a sound direction for further inquiry when he describes Auden's search for "an authority that allows a more inclusive and congenial arena for essential playfulness" (*Auden as a Social Poet*, p. 67). For a reading of Auden's early skepticism about the political enthusiasms of his contemporaries, see my "W. H. Auden's *The Orators:* Portraits of the Artist in the Thirties," *Twentieth Century Literature* 27 (1981): 247-61.

[15]*Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries* (New York: Harper & Row, 1961), p. 83.

[16]*The Complete Poems*, edited by Vivian de Sola Pinto and F. Warren Roberts (New York: Viking Press, 1980), p. 183.

[17]The difficult concept of *Tsimtsum* is outlined by Gershom G. Scholem in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1946), p. 260 ff. The essential insight is to approach the creation of time and space out of infinity and eternity as a process in which God *withdraws* himself in order to bring forth. As Scholem puts it, *Tsimtsum* "means briefly the existence of the universe is made

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

possible by a process of shrinkage in God." This idea finds a possible parallel in *Paradise Lost* VII, pp. 170-73.

[18]Cf. "Eternal Birth" in *Meister Eckhart*, translated by Raymond B. Blakney (New York: Harper & Row, 1941), pp. 118-24.

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Notes on Contributors

John R. Boly, born in 1948 in Portland, Oregon, is assistant professor of English at Dartmouth. Another of Professor Boly's articles on Auden appeared in *Twentieth Century Literature* for Fall 1981, and one is forthcoming in *Diacritics*.

John Clive, born in 1924 in Berlin, is William R. Kenan, Jr., Professor of History and Literature at Harvard. He is the author of *Scotch Reviewers* (1957) and *Thomas Babington Macaulay: The Shaping of the Historian* (1973). Professor Clive won the National Book Award in History in 1974 and the Robert Livingston Schuyler Prize of the American Historical Association in 1976.

Robert Darnton, born in 1939 in New York City, is professor of history at Princeton. His works include *Mesmerism and the End of the Enlightenment in France* (1968), *The Business of the Enlightenment: A Publishing History of the Encyclopédie, 1775-1800* (1979), and *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (1982). Professor Darnton has just received a MacArthur Prize Fellowship.

Stephen Greenblatt, born in 1943 in Cambridge, Massachusetts, is professor of English at the University of California, Berkeley. He is the author of *Sir Walter Ralegh: The Renaissance Man and His Roles* (1973) and *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* (1980). He has recently received the first annual British Council Prize in the Humanities, and has been awarded a Guggenheim Fellowship for 1983 for the study of Shakespeare and authority. Professor Greenblatt has just returned from a six-week stay as a visiting professor at Peking University, the People's Republic of China, where he lectured on Shakespeare.

John Hollander, born in 1929 in New York City, is professor of English at Yale. Professor Hollander is the author of *The Untuning of the Sky: Ideas of Music in English Poetry, 1500-1700* (1961), *Vision and Resonance: Two Senses of Poetic Form* (1975), *The Figure of Echo* (1981), and *Rhyme's Reason* (1981). Among his many volumes of poetry are *A Crackling of Thorns* (1958), *The Night Mirror* (1971), *Tales Told of the Fathers* (1975), and *Blue Wine* (1979). Professor Hollander's essay in this issue of *Daedalus* is part of a book in progress, to be called *The Mingled Measure*.

David Scott Kastan, born in 1946 in New York City, is associate professor of English at Dartmouth. He is the author of *Shakespeare and the Shapes of Time* (1982), and has written many articles and reviews in the field of Renaissance drama.

Wendy Doniger O'Flaherty, born in 1940 in New York City, is professor of history of religions and Indian studies in the Divinity School, professor in the Department of South Asian Civilizations, and a member of the Committee on Social Thought, at the University of Chicago. Professor O'Flaherty is the author of *Asceticism and Eroticism in the Mythology of Siva* (1973; 1981), *Hindu Myths* (1975); *The Origins of Evil in Hindu Mythology* (1976), *Women, Androgynes, and Other Mythical Beasts* (1980), *Karma and Rebirth in Classical Indian Traditions* (1981), and *The Rig Veda* (1982). Professor O'Flaherty first trained as a dancer with George Balanchine.

Jaroslav Pelikan, born in 1923 in Akron, is Sterling Professor of History at Yale. He is the author of very many books, including *From Luther to Kierkegaard* (1950), *The Shape of Death* (1961), *The Christian Intellectual* (1966), *Historical Theology* (1971), and *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (in three volumes) (1971ff.).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

He is, as well, the editor of many volumes. Professor Pelikan has received numerous awards and honorary degrees.

Carl E. Schorske, born in 1915 in New York City, is professor of history, emeritus, at Princeton. He is the author of *The Problem of Germany* (1947), *German Social Democracy, 1905-1917* (1955), and *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna, Politics and Culture* (1980).

Judith N. Shklar, born in 1928 in Riga, is John Cowles Professor of Government at Harvard. She is the author of *After Utopia* (1957), *Legalism* (1964), *Men and Citizens: A Study of Rousseau's Social Theory* (1969), and *Freedom and Independence: A Study of the Political Ideas of Hegel's Phenomenology* (1976).

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Issues of *DÆDALUS* in Print

These may be ordered at the current single issue price from the *Daedalus* Subscription Office, 1172 Commonwealth Avenue, Boston, Massachusetts 02134. For bulk order prices, see order card this issue.

Black Africa: A Generation After Independence *(Spring 1982)*

Religion *(Winter 1982)*

America's Schools: Portraits and Perspectives *(Fall 1981)*

America's Schools: Public and Private *(Summer 1981)*

American Indians, Blacks, Chicanos, and Puerto Ricans *(Spring 1981)*

American Defense Policy in the 1980s, Volume II *(Winter 1981)*

American Defense Policy in the 1980s, Volume I *(Fall 1980)*

The End of Consensus? *(Summer 1980)*

Intellect and Imagination: The Limits and Presuppositions of Intellectual Inquiry *(Spring 1980)*

Modern Technology: Problem or Opportunity? *(Winter 1980)*

The State *(Fall 1979)*

Hypocrisy, Illusion, and Evasion *(Summer 1979)*

The European Predicament *(Spring 1979)*

Looking for Europe *(Winter 1979)*

Generations *(Fall 1978)*

Rousseau for Our Time *(Summer 1978)*

Limits of Scientific Inquiry *(Spring 1978)*

A New America? *(Winter 1978)*

Edward Gibbon and the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire *(Summer 1976)*

Adulthood *(Spring 1976)*

In Praise of Books *(Winter 1976)*

Arms, Defense Policy, and Arms Control *(Summer 1975)*

Wisdom, Revelation, and Doubt: Perspectives on the First Millennium B.C. *(Spring 1975)*

Continued

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

American Higher Education: Toward an Uncertain Future. Volume II *(Winter 1975)*

American Higher Education: Toward an Uncertain Future. Volume I *(Fall 1974)*

Science and Its Public: The Changing Relationship *(Summer 1974)*

Twentieth-Century Classics Revisited *(Winter 1974)*

The Search for Knowledge *(Spring 1973)*

Post-Traditional Societies *(Winter 1973)*

How Others See the United States *(Fall 1972)*

Intellectuals and Change *(Summer 1972)*

Intellectuals and Tradition *(Spring 1972)*

Myth, Symbol, and Culture *(Winter 1972)*

The Future of the Black Colleges *(Summer 1971)*

The Historian and the World of the Twentieth Century *(Spring 1971)*

Historical Studies Today *(Winter 1971)*

The Making of Modern Science: Biographical Studies *(Fall 1970)*

Rights and Responsibilities: The University's Dilemma *(Summer 1970)*

Theory in Humanistic Studies *(Spring 1970)*

Daedalus Dialogues *(Fall 1969)*

The Future of the Humanities *(Summer 1969)*

Ethical Aspects of Experimentation with Human Subjects *(Spring 1969)*

Perspectives on Business *(Winter 1969)*

Philosophers and Kings *(Summer 1968)*

Historical Populations Studies *(Spring 1968)*

Students and Politics *(Winter 1968)*

America's Changing Environment *(Fall 1967)*

Color and Race *(Spring 1967)*

Religion in America *(Winter 1967)*

Fiction in Several Languages *(Fall 1966)*

Continued

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

Tradition and Change *(Summer 1966)*

Conditions of World Order *(Spring 1966)*

The Negro American—2 (special issue, *Winter 1966)*

The Negro American—1 (special issue, *Fall 1965)*

The Contemporary University: U.S.A. *(Fall 1964)*

Population, Prediction, Conflict, Existentialism *(Summer 1964)*

Themes in Transition *(Summer 1963)*

Perspectives on the Novel *(Spring 1963)*

The American Reading Public *(Winter 1963)*

Current Work and Controversies—2 *(Summer 1962)*

Science and Technology in Contemporary Society *(Spring 1962)*

Excellence and Leadership in a Democracy *(Fall 1961)*

Twenty Years of Daedalus *(Index 1958–1977)*

LICENSED TO UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED